BLISS

(The Culmination of Detachment)

Discourses
by
Upādhyāya Amar Muni

BLISS

It is given to very few even to function as a tool in fulfillment of a noble cause. Therefore, I consider myself extremely fortunate in having such a role albeit a small and passive one in bringing the English translation of the discourses given by Upadhyaya Sri Amar Muniji. I had undertaken this task mainly with a view to ensuring that the benefit of the pearls of wisdom and compassion delivered by Upadhyaya Sri Amar Muniji are available to the non-Hindi knowing section of the public. I have no doubt at all, once they had an opportunity of drinking at the fountain of Upadhyaya Shri's discourses, there will be a sea change in their life. I am sure that at least most of them would consider themselves twice blessed once by their having access to Upadhyaya's teachings and further in getting an opportunity to spread his message onwards. Even though I entered the threshold of this job with a sense of diffidence about my ability to do it at least with a semblance of success, great teachers have a way of influencing their diffident disciples to greater heights of achievement. I hope I have done my mite in fulfilling Acharya Sri's wishes. We are naturally grateful to Acharya Sri Chandanaji for permitting the translation of his discourses and its publication.

I have had commendable assistance from Smt. Priya Jain and Jigyasa Giri who were also ably helped by Sri Dulichand Jain, Sangeetha Surana, Probal Ray Choudhury and Dr. Pratibha Jain in getting the work translated into English. There is no doubt at all that they have done a tremendous job in bringing out the spirit underlining Acharya Sri's teachings. They have certainly earned the blessings of not only the Acharya Sri, but millions of people who will be going through this volume. I join the multitude of readers in conveying our thanks and good wishes to the translators and their helpers.

I am also grateful to Shri T R Daga, Secretary Veerayatan for permitting the English translation to be brought out.

Sages have told us that one of the severest weaknesses of

human kind is our attachment whether be it through word, speech or action. When man considers himself proud of possessing a lot of material things or as possessor of immense wisdom and profound thoughts, to all of which he is immensely attached, he entirely forgets that he came into this world with nothing and while departing his mortal frame, he can carry with him nothing What do we really own during our sojourn in life? It is only true that we have the access to the use of a few small things of which we really own nothing.

The sages and scriptures of almost all religions lay emphasis on the need for total detachment from all things be they material or otherwise. In fact we advised against even being attached to what or who we consider as God.

These lectures of Muniji have Aparigraha - Non-possession of things as their main refrain. Aparigraha is one of the rare instances where by giving up everything, one gets almost everything for, suffice is to say that I have got what one most desires - perfect BLISS!

Immense luster to our humble efforts has been added by the spiritual blessings conveyed by Pujya Acharya Sri Chandanaji . There is no doubt at all that people who have had occasion to meet the Acharya Sri Chandanaji consider themselves blessed. Acharya Sri's blessing is yet another example of her kindness towards all her disciples, of which I am proud to consider myself one of the humblest. May Acharya Sri's blessing shower on all of us.

In this age of corruption, greed and stress, there is much need for such works to be translated into universal languages and published for a wider audience. I am therefore grateful to my partners in M/s. Sugal & Damani, Chennai, Delhi & Mumbai for taking on the responsibility of publishing this noteworthy work.

In soulful prayer - N. Sugalchand Jain
No.25, Ranganathan Avenue
Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010

TO OUR READERS

Apart from their stupendous success in their business ventures, business family of Sugal & Damani have kept in their horizon, their ultimate objective of keeping the major tenets of Jainism as the core of their way of life. One of their modest attempts in this regard is to bring out the English translation of Aparigraha Darshan, the compendium of discourses originally delivered by Upadhyaya Amar Muniji in Hindi. In order to provide a far wider reach for the contents of these discourses, particularly among the younger generations, the present English translation of these discourses (translated into English by Smt. Priya Jain) as their humble tribute to the memory of Upadhyaya Amar Muniji.

The Sugal & Damani family offers this publication to the Humanity at large and hopes that all the readers of these discourses will reap the benefits of eternal Bliss, the ultimate result of Aparigraha.

SUGAL & DAMANI FAMILY
No.11, Ponnappa Lane, Triplicane
Chennai 600 005 India

FOREWORD

Venerable Gurudev Upadhyaya Amar Muni was a great seer and enlightened thinker of the spiritual world. His exceptional life-vision, heightened intuition and compassion kept him forever alert. An analytic mind, extraordinary qualities and the initiative to awaken the dormant potential made him a spiritual revolutionary of the highest order.

If complete detachment towards life made him a Yogi, then keen comprehension of the ancient religious texts and a true understanding of reality made him a super saint.

Whether he was dealing with a familial context or social institution, industrial development or spiritual pilgrimage, a conflicting world of political policies or religious laws - his inner capacity, creativity and energy to reach the deeper truths of all fields made him a literary genius. His literary masterpieces are but a peep into his holistic understanding and potential.

"Aparigraha Darshan" is one such literary work which has the dual power to cross over centuries and 'see' Tirthankara Mahavira and at the same time, give us an insight into our present lives.

Wealth is not an obstacle to spiritual life. Rather, it can well be a means to progress, he said. If one could only place one's feet firmly on the steps of the ladder of life and move on upwards, then one can be said to have traversed and conquered those steps, those 'means' towards upward progress . In the path of Sadhana, one ought not to cling to the 'sadhan' or means - this is the path of non-possessiveness.

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-

possessiveness constitute Dharma (the real path). These five are to be adopted as the Smaller Vows of the layperson's religious endeavors and the Greater Vows of that of the monk's path. Violence and possessiveness have to be given up so that non-violence and non-possessiveness may be embraced as a way of life Possessiveness means attachment for objects and wealth. To give that up is defined as an essential part of the aspirant's life. But such an object-focused definition of religion coupled with pressure to incorporate that into life has made religion impractical. When these ideals cannot be incorporated from within one's inner being, then religion remains at a superficial level According to Mahavira, possessiveness does not arise from the object itself; rather, it is attachment for the object which is the root of possessiveness. When attachment diminishes from life, when clinging to objects is effaced from life, then Mahavira's path of non-possessiveness shines forth.

In fact, non-possessiveness is an inner calling rather than external behaviour In Mahavira's vision, the amassing of objects is merely a collection which is important for family and society, as well as for the religious congregation. But the difference between collection and possessiveness is that collection in itself is considered a punya or noble deed where as possessiveness, a wrong deed. Rightful discriminative distribution of collectibles is not possessiveness. However, everyone does not have this right vision of distribution Mahavira's message to those who had the potential to develop this quality of non-possessiveness was to stay focused on their goal of productive increase of wealth so that the society at large may benefit from their punya, "Remain focused Your focus lets others find a vision. Your vision is the pillar of the economic system, as well as the guiding light of families, societies and, in fact, for the entire nation".

And those devout followers expressed their devotion to the Lord by saying "Chakhudayanam" - "Lord! You are the giver of vision". The Lord blessed his disciple Ananda by saying, "May you become a visionary. May you become the centre. May you hold the central axis of society. Remain detached and be alert towards the prescribed goals which will bring wealth, peace

and protection to the country."

Sacrifice devoid of detachment gives rise to darkness. How can a gloomy vision give light to Sadhana? It will only propel it towards darkness.

Know your responsibility. This will give rise to strength. A wealthy person must propel his means towards progress and revolutionize the country's energy with his Right Vision. Our future depends largely on energy which is ignited with detachment. History is witness to the fact that healthy, wealthy & peaceful societies are those that are born from great religious acts.

The Great Saint of Veerayatan, Amar Muniji, expounded three tenets for a good and pure life - Service, Education and Sadhana.

Service: Developing a healthy, clean life system. A life of non-violence.

Education: Constructing one's spiritual intelligence, and support towards such an act in the life of others as well.

Sadhana. Right distribution of acquired wealth by detachment. Non-possessiveness in life's sadhana.

Gurudev Amar Muniji's book "Aparigraha Darshan" is an inspirational work. It is a transcript for a successful householder's life.

Today, the entire world, and progressive India at large, is in need of a spiritual, intellectual, and economically strong society, for the emergence of enthusiasm in the youth and enterprising leadership. I believe that this book will be the guiding light for such an endeavour.

Acharya Chandanaji
Veerayatan
Rajgir
Vasant Panchami 2007

CONTENTS

What is possessiveness? 1

Individual and society 17

The path to spiritual enhancement 30

The flame of avarice 48

Non-possessiveness and charity 64

Attachment is bondage, detachment liberation 80

Life of an aspirant 97

Conflict resolution 115

Religion in everyday life 129

The canvas of life is larger than the 'self' 146

Non-possessiveness - a universal framework 158

What is Possessiveness ?

WHAT IS POSSESSIVENESS ?

Even if a man finds innumerable mountains of gold and silver as lofty as the great Mount Kailāśa, his desire, his thirst does not meet its end. Because desires are like the sky - unlimited...infinite.

Life is limited, but our desires, wants and wishes are unlimited...infinite. One cannot count the waves that rise in the sea even if one attempts to. As one wave recedes, another rises. Similarly if one wants to measure the sky, it is impossible to do so, because the sky is infinite and has no boundaries. It stretches beyond this universe, beyond the reach of imagination. Likewise, one cannot reach the end of one's desires. As one desire is fulfilled, another rises and before it is satiated the next one rears its head. Lord Mahāvīra says:

Even if a man finds innumerable mountains of gold and silver as lofty as the great Mount Kailāśa, his desire, his thirst does not meet its end. Because desires are like the sky - unlimited...infinite. [1]

Needs, however, are limited and therefore easier to satisfy. Man does not have to think or worry about them day and night.

1 suvaṇṇaruppassa u pavvayā bhave, siyā hu kelāsasamā asamkhayā narassa luddhassa ṇa tehi kiṁci, icchā hu āgāsasamā anaṁtiyā – hyayana Sūtra 9.48

Neither does he have to plan constantly on how to collect heaps of wealth to satisfy his needs. Therefore, one who is satisfied with his basic needs remains free - far from the clutches of possessions. Such a man may have fewer luxuries but he has the wealth of peace and contentment in abundance. Śaṅkarācārya has praised such a person by saying that he who is content at all levels is a truly wealthy man. This is because he does not burn in the fire of dissatisfaction and discontentment. His mind is not obsessed with plotting and deceiving others for the purpose of filling his own coffers. Thus he leads a life full of peace.

Possessiveness is not just accumulation of unnecessary wealth and objects; it also includes the accumulation of insignificant thoughts Gandhiji has remarked that one who crams his mind with insignificant knowledge is also possessive. Just as unnecessary objects cause clutter, so also useless and lowly thoughts clutter the mind and cause unrest. They give rise to perversions in life. Since objects of necessity and noble thoughts are the true wealth of man, an aspirant should keep his mind free of conflict and lust, and remain content in the lap of true happiness.

Let us now examine the definition of possessiveness. What is *parigraha*? The meaning of the word '*parigraha*' is: to accumulate. From this viewpoint, not just wealth and comforts, but other essentials of life, including our very bodies and karmas fall under the purview of possessiveness. If to accumulate an object is possessiveness, a three-fold classification can be made regarding possessions:

1. body
2. karmas
3. upādhi (the means of enjoyment)

Now, let us examine the above classification. The body is a possession, which is acquired by the soul. There is not an instant when the soul is free of the living body. It is true that the physical body does not exist when the soul traverses from one form of existence to another, but the subtle bodies of fire and

karmic particles always remain companions of the soul.

So also, karmas are considered as possessions because they are acquired by the soul at all times, in every moment. There is never a moment in worldly life when fresh karmas are not integrated into the soul. Even in the thirteenth,[2] most sublime stage of spiritual development, the soul is not truly free of karmas, because although there is complete purity of thought, karmas do arise even if just to be destroyed in the very next instant.

The total absence of body and karmas happens only in the liberated condition, not in the worldly one. So, in this worldly sojourn, the soul admits the body, and also the karmas at all times. As Mahatma Gandhi has said:

If you reflect on the body in the context of truth and the soul, then you will realize that it is also a possession.

Apart from the body and karmas, wealth, property and other means of enjoyment including relationships are, indubitably, possessions.

In such a framework, no one can be said to be free of possessions. Not even the naked monk. He also accepts his bed of wooden slab and grass, a pot for his daily routines, a peacock feather for protecting the creatures that may come in his way, texts to enhance his knowledge and of course, disciples. Hence, if acquiring of objects is defined as possessiveness, then there is no one in this world who can practice the vow of non-possessiveness.

As long as one is in this world, one is hounded by necessities. A person engrossed in spiritual practices also needs to keep his body healthy and active. It is not possible for the body to exist without its necessities. Of course, most of the times, we do not discriminate or stop to think about whether a certain need is really a need or a desire.

Necessities can be fulfilled, but the fulfilment of wishes and

2 The Jaina path of spiritual purification consists of fourteen stages known as gunasthāna. Beginning with the first stage of false perceptions due to excessive passions, the seeker gradually evolves and reaches higher and higher, shedding karmas and passions along the way. The thirteenth stage is the stage of omniscience

desires is difficult. The maze of desires is so complex that before one is attended to, another springs forth. There is no end to it. As you reflect some more on the distinction between needs and desires, you will understand that all the disharmony and discord in this world can be traced to this problem of possessiveness.

It is true that Jainism is idealistic and stresses on renunciation. It inspires the aspirant to move towards liberation. This Jaina ideal also has a consistent strand of realism running through it. It is not merely a flight of vacant idealism. For such flight, even at jet speed, serves no purpose. It is better to walk on solid ground, slowly and steadily, as then, the path is at least traversed.

Thus, Jainism integrates realism into its ideal. Although it propounds denial, it accepts reality as well. It permits the aspirant to fulfil his needs, without labeling that as possessiveness. It teaches to be free, not of necessities, but of desires. Even the ascetic who aspires to be liberated from this world cannot be free of necessities. This is why the *āgamas* say that it is not objects, but attachment and desire for objects that lead to possessiveness.[3] The *Tattvārtha Sūtra* proclaims:

Attachment is possessiveness.[4]

When an ascetic cannot be free of his needs, how can a householder be? He is connected with his family, society and nation. He cannot remain aloof from these. It is his duty to perform his responsibilities and provide for himself and his family. Therefore, though he must attend to his needs, he must definitely learn to put a brake on desires. This is why householders cannot adopt the vow of limiting necessities (*āvaśyakatā parimāna*), but only of limiting desires (*icchā parimāṇa*). It is thus obvious that acquiring an object does not qualify as possessiveness. Possessiveness does not reside in the object, but in desires, ambitions and attachments. Therefore, desire, ambition, avarice and attachment are considered as synonyms of possessiveness. A sage of ancient times has aptly stated in Sanskrit literature.

3 mucchā pariggaho vutto nāyaputtena tāinā -- *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*
4 mūrchā parigrahah -- *Tattvārtha Sūtra*

Those who are enslaved by their own desires are enslaved by the whole world.[5]

When a wave of desire rises in the mind, they are drowned in its current. Those who do not exercise their will to arrest the waves of desire cannot become the leaders of this world. The body and the senses are dependent on the mind for their actions. If the mind is enslaved by these waves of desire, then the flow of life is reversed - it moves backwards. This slavery of the mind is not just limited to this birth. It carries on endlessly, life after life, causing stagnation and even regression at every step.

It often appears as though the spiritual seeker has relinquished his desires and his attachment for his wealth and family. But in truth, his attachments which were visible earlier are now blanketed by his sādhanā. They have not died, but rather have lodged themselves deep within him. Let me explain myself. Those who donate lakhs of rupees in this life, dream of gaining multifold in their afterlife. Whatever they have sacrificed here does not give them peace of mind since they are obsessed with expectations of rewards in their lives to come. Such is the strange nature of sacrifice! Here, they are willing to abstain even from water while fasting, thereby believing that they have conquered their thirst, but deep within they long to drink the celestial wine. An aspirant vows to abstain from other women, and sometimes even renounces his marital pleasures with his own wife, but his mind is constantly hankering after heavenly damsels. This seems as though the aim of adopting the vow of celibacy in the present is to enjoy the rewards through sensual gratification in the future. Obviously, such renunciation is not a genuine one. It is but a gamble - renunciation in exchange for future enjoyment, abstinence from indulgence for eternal rewards. It seems as if the only difference is that some people are enslaved by the enjoyment of present life while others are enslaved by promises of bliss beyond. But whether we are tied to the pole of this world or the next, the soul is always in bondage. The purpose of renunciation is freedom from bondage. But where is

5 āśāyā ye dāsāḥ te dāsāḥ sarva-lokasya, āśā dāsī yeṣāṁ, tesāṁ dāsāyate loka

the freedom in such renunciation? In fact, it is easier to untie the knot of this world than that of what lies beyond.

Who is the master of his own mind? Unlike those who are enslaved by their desires, there are some who have truly overcome desires. These great souls are not sucked into the currents of desire, rather they dictate where and how the mind should travel. They have the power to enslave desires and steer their minds in any direction they deem fit They are the true masters of the mind and are referred to as *'Jagannātha'* in Indian philosophy, which means the master of the universe. As Śaṅkarācārya states

Who has conquered the universe? He who has conquered his mind.[6]

Verily, he who is defeated by his mind is defeated by the world The mind is considered the centre of resolves - the commander of the body and the senses If the mind is restless or sorrowful, then even a healthy body loses its energy. But if the mind is charged with enthusiasm and hope, then even a lean and bony body can cross the mountainous range of life

Now the question before us - how can we prioritize our desires? Which desires are useful and which are meaningless? When we make such a classification of desires, we can organize our life, bring happiness into it without allowing the burden of desires to weigh us down. So, what we need to do is to remove from the mind those desires which are useless and harmful and then prioritize the remaining desires – those that need immediate attention and those that can be attended to later. If we are hungry, food is an immediate priority, but sweets and savouries are not a must. These are simply a temptation of the mind. Therefore, even without these, one should be able to enjoy the simple food which will help in the sustenance of life. Thus, if one can prioritize wisely, then contentment and simple joys will be in abundance. This is in perfect tune with what was stated by Lord Mahāvīra that we eat to sustain our life, not live for the sake of food The great seer has stated:

6 jitam jagat kema mano hi yena

One must eat food to sustain life. [7]

The problem arises when sustenance is not given as much importance as enjoyment and indulgence. Food is necessary for life, but not spices. They do not satiate hunger in any way, they only satisfy the palette. Likewise, ornamental vessels of brass, gold and silver, expensive furniture do not serve the purpose of hunger. These external decorations are only to please the ego. If we examine the things we desire, we will find that very few of them are actual necessities. In fact, our needs are so minimal that fulfilling them does not require much effort on our part. Most of the trouble we take is for exhibitionism and ego-satisfaction.

I ask you - should wealth be worshipped or the individual? Once, a well-known and wealthy person came to meet me. We had a discussion on various issues out of which there is one I would like to share with you. In the course of our discussion, a question arose whether in today's world a person is not respected as much as his wealth is. He said, "When I was a poor ordinary man, nobody ever greeted me nor responded to my greetings. But today when I have wealth and extravagance, everybody greets me. In fact, I sometimes answer by saying, "Alright, I will pass on your greetings." One day someone asked me, "Whom will you communicate my greetings to?" I answered, "You greet not me, but my wealth. If it was me you greeted, it should have happened when I was not as wealthy. Therefore, I will pass it on to Goddess Lakṣmī who resides in my life in the form of my money."

One who has the potential to rise above this platform created by society and make a true evaluation of personal qualities is a truly humble person. His wisdom remains unaffected by his success.

Let me tell you another incident. Once, a rich man and his cousin were invited for a meal to a poor man's house. When the cousin saw the crumbling house of the host, he questioned, "What kind of a hell have we come to?" The rich man answered, "Instead of looking at the external appearance and residence of a person, try to focus on his pure emotion of hospitality. This is not an invitation by the crumbling house, rather it is a loving

7 javaṇaṭṭāe bhuñjijjā

invitation of a simple and pure person."

How lofty and profound are the thoughts of this wealthy man! Today people lead their lives without having any clue about how to live. They neither know how to follow the ideals of life nor know how to make an honest living. The paradox is that we expound theories of how we can tread the narrow path of the after-world without even understanding how to walk on the broad road of this present life.

So, returning to my story, the poor man served some *roṭīs* and mango pickle in an old, cracked brass plate to his guests He served water in the same utensil he had used for cooking his meagre meal. The rich man enjoyed and relished his meal, but his cousin remained perplexed by the *roṭīs*, plate and the water container I put this question to you – was there any difference in the food placed before the two guests? Not at all. Nevertheless, one satisfied his hunger with joy and contentment, while the other expressed irritation and agitation and finally wound up not eating anything. Therefore, we have to conclude that he wanted to eat not because he was hungry, but to satisfy his desire and temptation

What do these two people represent? While one represents contentment and equanimity, the other represents dissatisfaction and exhibitionism. For the cousin, just the food had no attraction, it had to be presented in an ostentatious manner. But the rich man was willing to look at life with wisdom and make a distinction between needs and desires. He could control his desires by his reflection and discrimination.

Take the example of a woman who needs a saree. Instead of simply buying one, if she makes a fuss that the saree should be an expensive one, it should be made of silk with gold embroidery on it, then is this saree a necessity or a desire to satiate her ego or her whim?

Once, I went to a house for receiving alms. After giving the *gocharī*, the man of the house requested me to see his guest room. The room was full of decorative items, so much so that there

was hardly any comfortable space to walk around. So I asked him, "*Seṭh*, have you made this room for yourself or for all these artifacts? He answered, "*Mahārāj*, obviously for myself!" To this I replied, "*Seṭh*, this room is stuffed with so many artifacts that the entrance is cramped. Moreover, it must be quite a source of worry to you that any of these expensive articles might break or get lost! If a child accidentally drops something, I am sure he would get a thrashing. Now you decide - is this room really for you or is it only for these possessions?" The man had no answer.

More often than not, people start out to build a home for themselves, but before they realize it, they find their home cluttered with objects that their minds and egos have desired. Soon all their energies are wasted on the upkeep of those lifeless articles which like unwanted guests neither give joy nor have any value in terms of utility.

A house is a necessity, but it is also essential that it is kept clean and airy. No religion asks a householder to relinquish his house and live on the footpath with his family. Neither does any religion deny you the choice to work hard, earn well and live well. It does not expect you to live off the discards of others. This is not proper religious conduct, it is only a pretense. The purpose of religious conduct is to make a wise discrimination between needs and desires. Without accepting the reality of life and its needs, no religion can be true.

Therefore, the best course of action is to adopt *icchā parimāṇa vrata*, the vow of limiting desires as propounded by Lord Mahāvīra if one wants to find peace and joy. When we learn to prioritize and distinguish between actual needs and whimsical desires, then we will start constructing a wholesome and meaningful life.

We all know that needs and desires are two sides of the coin of life. But to remain aware of their distinction at every step is a daunting task. This is the path of *sādhanā*. Until the last breath of life, a person cannot be free of necessities. But it is for him to control the quantum of his necessities. If not, his necessities flamed by his desires become endless, bringing about his downfall.

A person who exerts control on his desires arranges his life with economy and precision. As soon as the flow of desires cease, his life becomes controlled and limited. He is then unaffected by the craving for objects of luxury and remains content with the objects of bare necessity.

Unnecessary accumulation is a sin, a wrong-doing not just in a religious context, but in a social and national context as well. The conflicts prevalent in society and nation are largely due to the tendency to accumulate. As the wealthy begin to hoard more and more, resources are depleted, thereby causing inflation. The ordinary man on the street cannot afford even his basic requirements due to the rise in prices. Thus the country is divided into two sects - the rich and the poor, or the capitalists and the communists. Communism hasn't sprung out of nowhere. The extreme situation of haves and have-nots has given birth to communism. Just like the natural elements, even food, water and clothing should be equally available to all.

No thinker is divided on this issue. Jainism states that the root cause of sin, irreligion and conflict is excessive accumulation. He who accumulates objects of luxury and uses them just for himself, not distributing them evenly, cannot ever find peace According to Lord Mahāvīra:

One who does not distribute wisely cannot attain liberation.[8]

Peace lies not in self-satiation but in self sacrifice; not in receiving, but in giving; not in accumulation, but in relinquishing. He who is caught in the maze of accumulation cannot ever knock on the gates of liberation.

All great thinkers have categorized the tendency of possessiveness as an undesirable quality. The great poet and dramatist Shakespeare states unequivocally, "Gold is worse poison to a man's soul than any mortal drug." Christ taught in his sermons, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

8 asamvibhāgī na hu tassa mukkho - *Daśvaikālika Sūtra*

This proves beyond doubt that possessiveness is worthless on all counts. It brings about discord at a personal level and destroys the peace of societies and nations. The lesser the accumulation, the lesser are one's worries - less coin, less care. He who has few possessions has peace in abundance. He is the richest who is content with the least since he has found the rare treasure of never-ending peace. There is nothing more precious than peace in this world.

Who does not long for peace? But for this, it is essential that man relinquishes the need to accumulate. Also, he must strive for simplicity and economy in his life. It is important for an aspirant not to allow his desires to soar beyond control. He must remain vigilant and exercise discrimination while acquiring objects such as gold, silver, gems, fields, property, vehicles, and animals and ensure that he never acquires what he may not need.

Wealth is inert in itself, neither a virtue nor a sin. In itself, it is not even a possession. If being wealthy is equalled to being possessive, then the scriptural texts have to redefine possessiveness. The *āgama* pronounces that having wealth is not possessiveness, attachment is. If a person has neither cloth to cover himself, nor food to eat, nor even a roof to call his own, yet if his mind is constantly battling with countless desires, if he is obsessed with power and wealth, then he is considered possessive. But if he is free of desire, delusion and attachments, then all the wealth in the world will not make him possessive

Those whose minds are full of delusion think they own the whole world. Those who have crossed the boundaries of delusions know that nothing belongs to them. [9]

Verily, it is not wealth and property that make one possessive, but the desire and attachment in the mind. To acquire anything which is not needed by him or his family is the root cause of disharmony. Therefore, it is the primary duty of every aspirant to measure his desires, control his ambitions, strive to rise above attachments and affections and work towards reducing

9 mūrchā-chnna-dhiyām sarva-jagadeva parigrahaḥ mūcrchayā rahitānāṁ tu jagadevāparigrahaḥ

his necessities. The watchfulness over one's desires and the resulting action there-in, is non-possessiveness, which is the pathway to liberation.

In the context of possessiveness, the venerable Mahāvīra says of Ānanda, the householder:

He limits his own desires.[10]

Here, the reference is not to the extent of wealth or objects. Ānanda learns to limit his own desires which are endless. When desires are limited, objects are automatically limited; this is the first step to non-possessiveness

Just as a ship cannot sail without water, human beings cannot live without a certain amount of wealth and luxuries. As countless drops of water float beneath the ship, causing it no harm, so also those who stay afloat their possessions sail smoothly through life All the wealth in the world may lie at a person's feet, but if his mind is free of desires, then he is free of fear and danger. Even a whirlpool of wealth cannot stop his spiritual journey. But just as a little water entering the ship can cause it to sink, so also a few waves of attachment can rock the boat of life. Money and wealth are not possessiveness or sin, but can be the medium for possessiveness and sin.

Truly, attachment is possessiveness, attachment is sin and attachment is the cause of this worldly sojourn. This attachment towards wealth, material, country, political leanings, communal views, or even towards one's disciples is nothing but sheer burden - a dead weight that can cause a ship to sink.

The pursuit of detachment is the pursuit of non-possessiveness. The foremost condition on the path of non-possessiveness is not the relinquishing of wealth and objects, but of attachment. Only he who can overcome his desires and ambitions can tread the path of non-possessiveness. He is not forbidden the use of objects, but must always remain vigilant and detached from those objects. If two sets of clothing are enough for a year, then an accumulation of many more clothes

10 icchāparimānam kareha -- *Upāsakadaśānga Sūtra*

stemming from a yearning for design and colour is not justified. It is considered possessiveness. Clothes, utensils and other objects are essential for living. But one must be vigilant not to cross the boundary of necessity. Some of you have so many possessions that they rust in your trunks, yet others die of hunger and cold. Some of you overeat and suffer from indigestion and related diseases, while many others die of hunger and scarcity. A non-possessive person is aware of this disparity. He never does anything, which causes differences and conflicts within family, state or country.

It is when a person is blinded by his desires that he cannot see beyond his selfishness. Here, he sows the seeds of conflict which aggravate the feelings of insecurity and jealousy, thus leading to disharmony. The only way to destroy these negative feelings is to forfeit desires and unnecessary accumulation.

Non-possessiveness lies at the core of world-peace. It is the life-breath of *sādhanā* as opposed to possessiveness, which is death. Non-possessiveness nurtures detachment and kills attachment. Detachment is virtue and attachment vice. Detachment is the gateway of heaven and liberation and attachment that of worldly sojourn.

Individual

and

Society

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

The remedy to suffering is to go beyond the limitation of the self and reach out to others. You will find that the moments of utmost happiness in your life have always been those in which you uttered a word or performed an act of compassion or selfless love.

The root cause of conflict and restlessness is desire. When it creeps into the mind, it becomes an obsession - an obsession that has to be fulfilled at any cost. None are free of desire. All of us are consumed by desires and needs. They vary from one individual to another, even within a small unit, like a family. Each member strives to fulfil his own desire. And this desire sows the seeds of selfishness. So what does one do if his desire is in conflict with that of another? Consumed by his own desire, he attends to himself and does not hesitate to ignore others. Herein begins the endless vicious cycle of conflicts - within families, societies, states and nations. They all mirror the same phenomenon. Whether it is conflict within a small family or a world war, the root cause is always selfish motives and fulfilment of desires. All misery, conflict and unhappiness in this world can be traced to selfishness, endless greed and unfulfilled ambitions.

All of us realize that selfishness is the cause of all the unhappiness in the world, but are deluded by the thought that it

is always somebody else's selfishness and never our own. Even in an unthinking moment, one does not accept the truth that his selfishness is the reason for his sorrows. In trying to veil his own selfishness, he is trapped in a vicious cycle of self-destruction, born out of ignorance and delusion. Such ignorance and false ambition drag him down to the hell of discord and endless suffering.

What exactly are heaven and hell? Not realizing that the reasons for suffering are one's own selfishness and desire, and instead blaming it on another - such ignorance is hell. Accepting this truth and expressing it in conduct - such wisdom is heaven. When you will admit without any pride that all your unhappiness is the result of your own selfishness, you will enter the path of wisdom.

The pursuit of selfishness is hell. The relinquishment of selfishness is heaven. When a person insists on fulfilling his desires, he becomes the cause of not just his own sufferings, but also of others who are linked to him and influenced by him Blinded by his desires, he forgets that just like him, others too have their needs and desires, and attending to them is his duty as well. So the wise proclaim that the self blindly sinks into all its gratifications and yet never finds any contentment.

The only remedy is to go beyond the limitation of the self and reach out to others. As the wise proclaim:

Learn to desire for others what you desire for yourself and never desire for others what you do not desire for yourself. This is the essence of Jaina religion.[1]

The message of non-violence that was taught by Lord Mahāvīra two thousand five hundred years ago stands untarnished even today. Even more so, because in today's democratic context, where the world has become one unit, its importance has become more relevant. The Great Seer realized that no person can retain an identity alienated from society. He needs people around him to enjoy life and to experience the joys of interaction. So, if man

---

1 jam icchasi appaṇato, jaṁ ca na icchasi appanato taṁ iccha parassa vi, ettiyagaṁ jinasāsanayaṁ – *Bruhatkalpa Bhāsya* -- 4584

cannot live apart from society, it is essential that he cultivate generosity and large-heartedness towards those who are in his vicinity and in his workplace. As members of society, it is our responsibility to inculcate within ourselves and others, a sense of togetherness and belonging. Distrust among fellowmen is the greatest cause for the downfall of societies. Thus this ideal of unity, of empathy among individuals in a society has to be reiterated over and over again.

The ever nagging question is, who is more important - the individual or the society? Is the individual the basis for society or is society the basis for an individual? Some thinkers say that individual is the larger issue because society is comprised of individuals. Others say that society is larger because an individual cannot have an identity without society. When the drop merges into the ocean, it is a drop no longer, it is only the ocean. The same is the state of individual and society, of one and many, of individual consciousness and collective consciousness. In my view, neither individualism nor socialism can stand alone In some aspects, individual is important and in others, society. The individual is important because he is the foundation of society and society is important because it situates the individual. If we consider this seriously, we will realize that both are important in their spheres. Neither is smaller or bigger than the other. If an individual's identity does not exist in the universe, can family, society and nation have an existence at all?

The worth of a nation depends on the worth of the individuals who make it. So also the worth of a society depends on the worth of the individuals who make it. The same holds good for families too. Even if an individual exists on his own, within the purview of his family, he is many, despite being an individual.

So the question is, when individuals and socieities are interdependant, how can the individual have a separate identity? How is it possible? It is possible on the basis of his individuality. Every individual has his own individuality, on the basis of which he is one, despite being among many. Individuality is like the fragrance of a flower. Fragrance is not visible, yet, it can be felt.

In the same vein, we can always sense the 'individual'. Society must also learn to respect, cherish and nurture his individuality. Only then can the individual nurture society.

There is an intimate relation between the individual and society. There are various contrary views regarding the relationship between the individual and society, but all thinkers agree that to create differences and divisions between the two is beneficial to neither.

However, society is prior to the individual. Whenever we think of an individual, we automatically assume that he must have an existence in a larger framework or group. Individuals come and go, but the society remains. Society has a longer existence than the individual. It is the society which imparts culture and civilization to the individual. A child's personality is formed and framed by his social structure. All that he learns, whether good or bad, is within the framework of the society to which he belongs. Only the capacity to learn is his own. The development of his 'I' or ego which makes him an 'individual' happens within his society.

Society has its own system by which it controls the individual. It has its own existence and form. Nevertheless, it is also true that in the absence of 'individuals', society cannot have an existence. Individuals influence the society. Although they seem to be two independent 'realms', neither can exist or develop without the other. Neither can an individual leave the society nor can the society exist without the individual.

Between the two it is easier to understand society as a whole rather than a person's 'individuality'. To understand an individual's personality, we need to consider his psychological frame Psychological theories state that people are of two kinds - introverts and extroverts An introvert is one who arrives at conclusions by dwelling on his own thoughts rather than seeking the views of others whereas an extrovert is one who interacts and mingles with family and society as a cheerful part of a larger group. He finds solutions within an interactive framework.

Why do these differences exist? This is because of each person's individuality or personality. The personality is the foundation for a person's behaviour. If a person is an introvert, we see a sense of isolation in his personality. An extrovert mingles with everyone without remaining focussed within himself all the time but an introvert, even in a social environment, remains aloof from all. That aspect of personality which relates to social structures, which is important for social harmony, is what we term as conduct. Good and noble character is a pre-requisite if one is to lead a fruitful and happy social life. A person who is not of good character cannot belong to any group. A person's interactions with others in harmony or disharmony reflects his character and personality. Social environment is the litmus test of an individual's personality.

Ācārya Sanghadāsa Ganī is a great religious commentator of our culture. His delightful commentaries full of in-depth analysis leave us spell bound The commentaries have an abundance of analogies on the day-to-day problems of man and on how he should deal with life's myriad situations. Let me narrate one such interesting analogy.

There once ruled a great king who had three sons. As he became old he began to ask himself which of his three sons he would like to crown as heir-apparent to the throne. As a general rule, either the eldest offspring or the king's favourite son is crowned successor to the throne. But the old king did not approve of both these options. All three were equally dear to him and he decided to put them to test to find out who would befit the throne.

After consultation with his ministers, the king invited the three princes to the palace for a banquet. When they were seated, three platters of exotic food were placed before them. But just as they began to eat, they saw three hunting dogs approaching each of them ferociously. The first prince was terrified and thought, "Today this hungry dog is going to make a meal out of me. Is this why we were called here?" So thinking, he ran for his life, and the dog ate his meal. The second prince was courageous and

brave. He looked around and found a stick. He sprung forward and hit at the second dog, aiming for its head. This caused the dog to step away and the prince began to eat. But the dog did not give up. The prince kept lashing at him as he ate his meal. Thus the fight between the prince and the dog continued, while the prince continued to eat.

As the third dog hovered around the third prince, he was neither frightened nor did he turn aggressive. He simply emptied a little food from his plate in front of the dog. The dog started eating and the prince enjoyed his meal as well. On and off the dog would bark and the prince would give some more from his sumptuous platter. In this manner, the prince enjoyed his meal and the dog was satisfied as well In a short while, not only did the dog calm down, he also became friendly and wagged his tail at the prince to express his love and gratitude.

The test of the princes was over The king and his ministers held a meeting to discuss the outcome. The consensus was that the prince who had run away was not fit to be a king. Life often brings forth challenges and contrary situations that one cannot turn away from. Such a coward cannot do his subjects and the nation any good. Making him a successor would result in the disintegration of the empire.

Regarding the second prince, although they agreed that he was brave and courageous, they knew that decisions in this world are not taken by brute force alone. In him, they found a man who would protect himself and his belongings but did not have the quality of extending his compassion to others. He seemed ready to destroy anything on the strength of his sword and might. They reasoned that although he may never run away from difficulties, he would also not hesitate to resort to violence at the slightest provocation. Therefore they decided that he would also not be fit to rule. Since he did not possess the necessary compassion to be a good king, he would only end up creating restlessness in the nation.

It was therefore decided that the third prince was the one worthy of the throne. He had proved without doubt that he

had the wisdom to live and let live. By feeding the dog from his plate he showed that it is always possible to look after one's own needs as well as those of others. In this manner he was able to win the trust of his opponent, in this case, the dog. With his extra resources, he would extend help to others. Such an attitude is much needed in life. He who uses his wisdom in crisis takes care of himself as well as others. Such a man can be trusted with great responsibilities Therefore the king appointed his third son as his successor, and rightly so, don't you think?

The idea behind Ācārya Sanghadāsa Gaṇī's analogy is that communities and nations can evolve with those leaders who establish an ideal by their wise distribution of resources. The heart that has reached complete selflessness in its love for others has not only gained immense joy, but has attained immortality You will find that the moments of utmost happiness in your life have always been those in which you uttered a word or performed an act of compassion or selfless love

If you introspect, you will realize that the pain caused by natural calamities in the world is much less than the pain caused by fellow beings Nature is bountiful and gives us happiness in abundance. If only we would stop hurting our fellow human beings by our ruthless and insensitive actions, this world which seems like a living hell can indeed become a heaven on earth!

One who does not kill nor asks another to kill, one who does not defeat another nor instigates others to do so, such a man befriends all. None are in conflict with him.[2]

The Taoist religious leader Laotse spreads the message of peace thus stating, "Others will behave with you as you behave with them."

Confucius propogated the ancient religion of China with the message, "Do not do unto others what you dislike for yourself."

So, which is the religion that advocates killing, slaughter or

2 yo na hanti na dhāveti, na jināti na jāyate mittam so savva bhūtesu veram tassa na kenacit -- *Itivuttaka pru 0.20*

violence? None. All of them give the same message of universal friendliness, tolerance towards all of humanity and protection to animals.

But it is disappointing that the world today has turned a blind eye towards violence. Innocent people are massacred, some blinded, some amputated; humanity seems to be in a shredding machine! News of people being burnt alive or buried alive, scenes of tens and thousands of people rendered homeless and inflicted with injury are mere stories in the news today. The screams of suffering humanity pierce the very core of our being and yet the violence continues! Rape, murder, terrorism in various forms - death dances in its naked form. Man is not human any more. He has become demoniac and sometimes even worse than a demon. Truly, shame has been put to shame!

So, are we saying that culture and non-violence are lost forever? One does not have to go far to see the demoniac crimes that are plaguing the world today. Everyday we receive news of how the more powerful nations wield brute force over less powerful nations. It seems as if there is no humanism left any more. And all this happens in the name of patriotism, culture and religion.

The need of the hour is a collective effort, an ethical approach. What is needed is non co-operation. As long as those bent upon ruling others gain military and financial help from the superpowers, this power game will continue. It is unfortunate that most of the countries interact only out of selfishness and not out of humanitarianism.

I have been explaining that an individual is important in himself, but he cannot survive by rebelling against society. Yes, individualists consider society as a group of individuals, but they undermine the role of society and stress on the importance of the individual. Among the principles of individualism the main question is the autonomy of the individual. Freedom is the most important and cherished gift which every individual must treat with responsibility. Without freedom he cannot evolve, his development is not possible. No nation can control that basic

freedom. According to political principles, societies and nations are created to protect and nurture the freedom of individuals. An individual's freedom is curtailed by the nation only when he interferes in the life and work of others. A nation can only be protective of an individual's freedom. No nation has the right to interfere in the development of the individuality of a person. Nor does any society. Every human being has a right to his own individuality and personal growth.

I have been talking to you about the relationship between the individual and society. Whether an individual is part of a family, society or nation, his demand is the same - that of his autonomy and freedom. But the question is whether he can be allowed unconditional freedom. In my opinion, if a boundary is not established on personal freedom, a person becomes asocial, and sometimes antisocial as well. Then, how does one safeguard one's society and nation from tyranny and oppression? How can peace and order prevail? This does not mean that I wish to curtail a person's individuality and personality. What I am trying to assert is that freedom should not lead to recklessness. Neither should it lead to the splintering of society. An individual's life has protection and order only if the nation functions in a smooth and orderly way.

In this context it is crucial to understand the importance of society and the individual's role in it. As members of society, we cannot forfeit our duties for the sake of our freedom.

Indian tradition has always stressed upon the harmony between an individual and society. The great Masters, Mahāvīra and Buddha laid more emphasis on the *saṅgha* (congregation) than on the individual. In the Jaina culture, even the venerable *Tīrthaṅkaras* bow to the congregation and the order. The greatest of Ācāryas are also bound to obey the *saṅgha*. The Jaina *saṅgha* has a four-fold order - monk, nun, layman and laywoman. The *saṅgha* is affirmed by the unity of all four. From a spiritual perspective, whatever rights are available to a monk are also available to the nun. Whatever rights the layman has, the laywoman also has.

According to Jainism, the *sangha* is created by one person, the *Tīrthaṅkara*. Yet, the primary reason why prestige and glory is bestowed upon the strong pillars of the *saṅgha* and society is because an individual's evolution and development is strongly linked to these two pillars. The *sangha* is above the individual. During the process of laying down the constitution of the *saṅgha*, the layperson and the ascetic are accorded equal rights.

If we deeply reflect on the great tradition of the Jaina history and its unique *sangha* formation, we will realize that the roots of Jaina culture do not thrive in the individual but the collective, the social. Its socialism however is not economic and political but a spiritual socialism It is a socialism based on *sarvodaya* (collective evolution), where the evolution of all is equally accepted and nurtured Here one's progress does not depend on the deterioration of another. Rather, in the development of one lies the development of all, in the downfall of one lies the downfall of all, in the extinction of one lies the extinction of all. This is the spiritual socialism of Jaina culture.

Right now, *ahiṁsā* seems dormant, as if it has no role to play any more. Collapsing from all sides, it stands on the threshold of extinction. An *ahiṁsā* which is not pro-active does not have life-breath; it becomes lifeless It has simply reduced itself to non-indulgence in violence This narrow-minded approach to non-violence makes it a facade, stripping it of its richness and logic.

There are many spheres of life which appear to be based on non-violence, but when you look at them closely, you will see the cruel play of violence even there. Non-violence has taken a backseat, helplessly looking on as violence wreaks havoc on humanity In the face of inhumane tortures, should we hide behind a misinterpretation of *ahiṁsā* and call ourselves tolerant and forgiving?

The newspapers carry daily reports of national crimes, offenses and misdemeanors. Hundreds and thousands of people are being dislocated from their homes and countries only to become refugees in alien soils. But do the power brokers do anything about it?

It is unbelievable that beyond a feeble protest, the world at large simply retreats into silence after every dastardly act of violence. Where are our religious leaders who propogate non-violence, compassion and kindness in times like this? Where is non-violence? Where is compassion? Where is the humanity that every religion claims as its own? Does religion not have an answer then? Is it impotent - watching helplessly while man transforms into a monster?

As the world stands torn apart, the greatly debated issue is whether the individual should come first or the society. According to me, an integration is what is needed. Both individual and society must be interdependent and of mutual help to each other. Neither can progress by negating the other This is the *anekānta* of Jainism, a multipronged view. If we look at these two aspects from an *anekānta* point of view, we will see them in a new light The individual and the collective will merge. Many-in-one and one-in-many. Only then can mankind move ahead as a united force to face the challenges of a changing world

The Path to Spiritual Enhancement

THE PATH TO SPIRITUAL ENHANCEMENT

Sins can be cleansed with devotion that is pure, but devotion does not reside along with a desire for fame and external gratification.

As long as one is in this world, one is surrounded by necessities. For life to be active and functional, certain things are necessary. It is never possible that the body remains functional without any needs.

Let us examine this. We are often confused between what one desires and what one needs. When a person strives to satisfy his desires, his energies are directed to that end. As he fulfils one, the next one rears its ugly head. As this goes on, he is engulfed by the endless cycle of desires. Not knowing how to limit his desires, not knowing which one to fulfil and which one to ignore, he is trapped into trying to fulfil each one. Thus, enslaved by his wants and cravings, he spends his life in worthless pursuits.

The mind longs to find a solution to fulfil needs. Otherwise, how can one survive in this world? All religions accept this. Any religion that does not, cannot sustain for long. But let us clearly understand that desires are not needs and it is from ignorance

about this distinction that the endless conflicts in this world arise. When desires are confused with needs, a person is consumed by the demon of greed Then crossing the threshold of humanity, he destroys his own life as well as that of others. Hence, this distinction between needs and desires has been respected and emphasized by all religions.

Jainism is a religion that propounds renunciation. Remaining steadfast in austerities, the cleansing of sins is accomplished by the pure waters of knowledge.

The Jaina ideal paints a worthy picture of life before our eyes It propels the aspirant to move ahead by urging, "You are not just where you think you are You are not merely at the point where you find yourself today. Your present position is not the destination of tomorrow You have to walk on until the path exists no more The family in which you find yourself is not the extent of your responsibility Your journey does not end there You have a long journey ahead. Your journey will transport you beyond this finite circle to merge into the larger world where you will encounter the vastness of your soul "

It is when man merges with the universe, when he transcends from the limited to the limitless, when the waves of love and non-violence rise from his soul to embrace all, that godliness awakens in him. He who attains this godliness is worshipped as God or *Arhan*. This is the supreme Jaina ideal which aims at uprooting the corruptions of one's past

This religion of the *arhans* is not plain idealism, it is realistic as well. Idealism has the power to inspire, but not to progress. How can one survive in this world with idealistic imaginations? Better off is the one who treads gently on earth than he who flies in the sky of imagination. He may walk less, but at least he has walked It is important to have an ideal, since without it, a journey has no destination. Likewise the ideal needs a journey to reach fulfilment, otherwise it is an empty shell.

Dazed by the realm of idealism, do not forget the ground on which man rests his feet. The eyes may reach distances afar,

but not the feet. They both cannot traverse the same distance. The eyes may embrace the distant mountain peak within the span of a second and the mind may be tempted to reach there as well, but the feet cannot keep up with their swift companions. This chasm between the eyes and the feet is the dichotomy between idealism and realism Jainism teaches us beautifully and effectively how to strike this fine balance As long as a person is rooted in worldly life, family and community are part of his reality, as is the nation to which he belongs. He cannot consider himself an autonomous entity removed from these. Since he cannot separate himself from these, he cannot ignore their needs, nor forget them If he did, he would lose himself as well Such is the reality of responsibility, of life itself.

So it is that the scriptures speak of the vow of limiting one's desires (*icchā parimāna*), but not of limiting one's needs (*āvaśyakatā parimāṇa*) Necessities are a reality, not to be forgotten, not to be ignored. Verily, if something can be ignored, or forgotten, it is not a necessity, it is a desire. It is only desire which can be given up.

You must remain vigilant, because flights of imagination and ambition can lead you to believe that your desires are a necessary part of your existence. And thus a web of desires is woven, each craving to be fulfilled. You become enslaved by your desires and create a negative energy in your life. Jainism teaches us to nip in the bud those desires which grow wildly beyond our necessities. He who is content with the fulfilment of his necessities is a worthy aspirant indeed. He enriches his own life as well as that of others. On the contrary, he who is discontent and desires endlessly treats his life like a vehicle without a brake - a dangerous vehicle that will crush him as well as others.

Jainism says that the vehicle of life has to be driven, but within limits. Vigilance and control are a must if you want your journey to be peaceful and productive. Do not drive recklessly over others. If your self-interest clashes with another's, then stop to consider. Drive within your boundaries so that thousands of vehicles can move in harmony. Or else, there will be chaos.

Where there is control, there is vigilance, there is discrimination

and therein lies the dictum of non-possessiveness.

This was Ānanda's solution to his conflict. The control of desires. He accumulated wealth, but did not expand it further. He put an end to his desires and attachment by adopting a simple practice. He told himself, "I will not increase my wealth nor will I keep any more than this." In this manner, his life was blessed by contentment, by *icchā parimāṇa*.

The conflict prevalent in today's world is not just of today - it has existed since time immemorial. Try to get to its roots, and you will see for yourself that its primary reason is the prevalence of desires. The world wars that have shaken the world may have had other reasons as well, but the primary reasons were the unlimited desires of man.

The bloodshed of millions has been caused due to this bottomless pit of desires. When man tried to expand his desires beyond the scope of where his feet could reach, he sowed the seeds of conflict. As his feet trespassed on what was not his, conflict began. For those who have limited facilities and power, their conflict is on a limited scale, their boundary is limited as well. But for those who are powerful, conflicts cross limits and often take on an all-pervading form. Why did the battle of *Mahābhārata* happen? It was a battle that killed great warriors of India like moths in a flame, a flame that engulfed the culture, civilization, bravery and glory of the country. It was a war that spread darkness and converted a religious land into a graveyard. Destruction of such magnitude only because of unlimited desires!

Let me narrate an analogy. Imagine that two brothers live their entire life from inherited property. In such a situation, how can they teach their children lessons of independence and self worth since they have never earned a living for themselves? Considering they do give those lessons to their children, then if at the end of their lives, they bequeath their large mansions to them, how can they justify what they have taught? I ask this because by bequeathing their wealth to the children, are they not in reality confusing them by causing an upheaval of the

ideals taught to them?

When the wealth was divided between the Pāṇdavas and Kauravas, jealousy and greed crept in Duryodhana's mind, "Why do my cousins have mansions of gold? All they had was a small kingdom How have they progressed so much while my kingdom continues to remain as it is, without expanding even by an inch!"

Those who have not mastered the art of expanding their wealth and property resort to cunning manipulations and thievery. "Let me seize my brother's property and make it mine", they think. But this is not right, it is perverted thinking. Even if a person has a genuine need he should not resort to such actions.

A man who has no clothes steals from another to clothe himself Is this a solution to poverty? No! Because although he has clothed himself, he has stripped another.

A naked man cannot make another naked by stealing his clothes nor can a hungry man steal another's bread. So the wise option is to innovate methods to multiply resources. After all, in a world where the population is ever-increasing, if innovations in production are not implemented, how will the problem of haves and have-nots be solved?

Unfortunately, in India, not much attention is paid to production. Conflicts are never dealt with, always brushed aside under the carpet, and therefore, the vision of the self as part of a larger canvas is never created.

But imagine! If you learn that your life is made by none other than yourself, then you will learn the mantra of growth. You will then automatically transform the wealth that you have amassed into the larger resource pool, be it of the family, society or nation.

Since Duryodhana neither knew the art of production, nor endeavored to learn it, he was caught in the web of possessiveness from where arose gambling, injustice and torture. And what a nemesis it reached! He seized the kingdom of his brothers through

deceit and treachery finally leading to a gory war. And history will tell us that the tragic outcome of war is always destruction.

Krsṇā approaches Duryodhana and stands before him as a messenger. He who was no ordinary mortal, whose mere frown could cause deluges, sets aside his power and like an ordinary man, he stands as a messenger and begs Duryodhana for a pact of peace

There have been many great politicians and many great speeches, but that rendering by the Blue God was exceptional Preserved in history for posterity, it is something to be read and contemplated upon by all politicians and leaders.

In that speech of wisdom, Krsnā sheds light on how one must live one's life and what one must make of one's life. He pleads with Duryodhana, "It is my deepest wish that the Pāṇdavas remain safe. It is also my earnest wish that the lives of the Kauravas achieve greatness. These palaces of gold are not meant to be razed down to ashes. If my words are not heeded, rivers of blood will flow; if you brothers begin to slay each other, then remember what I say today - my eyes shall shed more tears than all the blood you will spill on the battlefield. So Duryodhana, even if you cannot give the Pāndavas their due, at least give them five small villages. The five Pānḍavas will listen to me and live their lives peacefully."

Such are the great moments in history The Pāṇḍavas were ready to accept just five villages out of that dynasty for whose expansion they had once battled and won over the world. With just so little, they would manage their lives, not aspiring for more.

In this manner, a limit is set on desires. Those Pāṇḍavas who had lived in palaces of gold were now willing to reside in a hut. On the other hand stands Duryodhana entangled in his web of desires, not content with his own dynasty, not content after coveting the dynasty of another.

It is true that whoever is possessed by the demon of possessiveness becomes a madman. Once possessed, the demon

takes control. There is no respite from it. Can a person possessed by such a strong power dare utter a word or do anything against it? Totally controlled, his life becomes not his to lead.

Duryodhana was completely possessed by this demon. To that humble request from Kṛṣṇā, he retorted, "Oh Keśava! You talk about giving away five villages. I don't know how large they may be, but I am not even willing to give away a needlepoint of land to the Pāndavas. Nothing without war! I will part with nothing."[1]

Be it an emperor owning palaces of gold, or a snake coiled over a treasure, they echo the same insecurity, stemming from their obsessive desire to hold on to their possessions. Duryodhana stated the same, "I will not give away anything in my lifetime." Attachment is always the cause of destruction.

It was this flaw in Duryodhana's character that lead to the great battle of *Mahābhārata* where rivers of blood flowed. This tendency to possess, the wish to part with nothing, to guard all possessions like a snake has been the web in which man has been caught since time out of memory.

Remember the story of Śreṇika and Kūnika. What a wonderful relationship a father and son can share! How many aspirations and hopes a father builds for his son! The scriptures pronounce:

One would wish for defeat at the hands of his son i.e. he would feel pride if his son outshines him. So also does the teacher feel towards his student.[2]

In the whole world, there are two spheres where one steps back happily to make place for another. One is the sphere of family, and the other that of religion. Father and son stand in the sphere of family and master and disciple stand in the sphere of religion. A master aspires to see his disciple move ahead, beyond what he has learnt from him and seeing the disciple thus, fills him with joy. In his disciple's increasing fame, the teacher finds his own fame, feels honoured and sees the success of his own life.

1 sūcyagrannaiva dāsyāmi binā yuddhena keśava!
2 putrādicchetparājayam śiṣyādicchetparājayam

In the family sphere, between the father and son, this emotion is even more intensified. Why does a man earn? Ask him and he will answer, "Whatever I do is for my family, for my children." What this means is that he has erased his identity and merged it with that of his children. Thus he sets his mind to enhance the life of his children. He directs all his energies towards that goal, forgetting himself in the process. The father may live in a hut, but if his son makes a palace of gold, he feels no sorrow, no jealousy. He may not be able to bear his neighbour's success, he may even try to put a spoke in that wheel, but his son's success gives him immense joy.

And the same goes for his son. He is secure in the knowledge that his father would only aspire for him and not any stranger. After all, whatever the father begets today, the son is bound to inherit tomorrow.

In this manner, much intimacy is seen between a father and son But alas! the web of possessiveness. It has changed this nectar into poison. Wherever the tendency of possessiveness increases and desires spread without any limit, there even nectar becomes poison, and bitterness creeps into the intimacy. Destruction laughs out loud. Possessiveness is the core of all sins.

King Śrenika is becoming old, and his son Kūnika, who is now a young man, feels restless The desire to rule the kingdom slowly creeps into his mind - he is now waiting to see the empty throne. He thinks, "What a misfortune that my father is not dying! It is time for him to die and for me to rule the kingdom." Selfishness distorts the vision of life and makes a man blind.

King Śreṇika is counting the last hours of his life. Even if longevity favours him, he can barely survive a year or two. And then Kūnika will get the throne. There is no doubt about that. He is the heir-apparent. But Kūṇika wants the throne much before his time; he dreams of being seated on it day and night.

Why is Kūṇika so restless? It is not as though he is dying of hunger or cold. The grandeur of the empire lies at his feet, for him to use as he pleases, as much as he wishes. There are no

limits set upon him. All his needs and wants are taken care of. It is not as if the old Śreṇika is tight-fisted and gives nothing to his son. The empire is under the control of the son; Śreṇika is just the namesake ruler and sits upon the throne for an hour or two everyday.

But Kūṇika is caught in the web of desires. Restless for the throne, his thoughts turn ugly, "Oh! What do I do with Father? He neither embraces renunciation nor death! He has heard the teachings of the Tīrthaṅkaras long enough, but is yet not ready to relinquish the throne. If he does not renounce voluntarily, should he be made to do so? If death does not come to him, should he not be made to die?"

Thus, enslaved by his desires, Kūṇika plots against his father and locks him in the dungeons. What other choice exists for one so completely blinded by greed? Violence is born from possessiveness.

The great ruler of Magadha is thus counting the last days of his life in prison. Gone are those days when he used to give away diamonds and pearls on the streets enroute the abode of Lord Mahāvīra where he went to hear discourses. Today, that great ruler is a mere prisoner and his days are meaningless.

Meanwhile the son has seated himself on the throne. But what is the result of all this? Have his desires been fulfilled? Has he found contentment? The answer is - No. Unrestrained desires never reach their end. The splendour of this world acts like fuel to the fire of avarice. It only kindles the flame, never putting it out. So the religious scholars proclaim:

The more you get, the more you want; desire increases with every gain. [3]

As one achieves more wealth and fame, avarice increases. Profit does not restrain greed, it only enhances it. Why is this so? The scriptures answer this question thus:

3 jahā lāho tahā loho, lāhā loho pavaḍḍhai. – Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 8.17

For avarice is boundless like the sky. [4]

Just as the sky has no end and is infinite, so also are desires limitless. A person who has thousands desires lakhs, and he who has lakhs desires crores. The king wants to become a monarch, the monarch wants to become an emperor. And an emperor wants other emperors to accept his sovereignty. Where is the peace? Contentment lies not in satiating desires, but in nipping them in the bud One cannot find contentment outside. It lies within the core of a person It lies not in the treasury, it is a treasure by itself.

But like other mortals, Kūnika too had not grasped this noble truth Having imprisoned his old father, having conquered the throne, he was still restless. Now his eyes were fixed upon his brothers What did they have? A jewel and an elephant A vast empire on one hand and just a piece of jewellery and an elephant on the other. Can the two really be compared?

One can say that the greed for the elephant and the jewel did not emerge in Kūnika's mind It was instigated by his queen. Whether a person jumps into fire of his own free will or at the instigation of another, is there a difference? The effect is the same The cause is of no consequence. Either way, he has to suffer in the flames. The point is that when greed crept into Kūnika's heart, he ordered his brothers to hand over their possessions to him

The brothers disagreed, "We have got no share of the empire If you want even the jewel and the elephant from us, then give us a share of the throne "

Kūnika retorted, "I have not received the empire in charity. I have achieved it by myself Therefore, you have no share in it."

When such tendencies arise, when one wants to give nothing but take everything, then sharp daggers of avarice twist the mind. The brothers sought refuge with their maternal grandfather and this further angered Kūṇika. Now he made his grandfather an enemy too. Flames of war and violence always

4 icchā hu āgāsasamā anantiyā - Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 9 48

erupt from such negative tendencies.

There are many such people in this world who do not hesitate to trample over thousands of people to achieve their selfish goals. Their conscience remains unperturbed. What is this power that destroys one's discrimination? Why does man become such a demon?

The question is - can this demon redeem itself? The answer to this question is an obvious 'Yes' By exercizing control over his desires, man can transform the demon within. He is then truly considered a saint Such astonishing incidents exist in history.

There are many who shed the blood of their own kin and later become devotees to redeem themselves and regain lost respect. Kūnika did the same. After committing numerous sins, he turned to Lord Mahāvīra for redemption. In fact, it is said that he would not drink even a sip of water until he got news of his master's well being everyday.

Witness this scene. Thousands have gathered to hear the discourse of Lord Mahāvīra Kūnika aspires to end his life before the Lord so that he may go to heaven "May my devotion cleanse my sins", he prays ardently

Yes, sins can be cleansed with devotion that is pure, but devotion does not reside along with a desire for fame and external gratification.

So it came to be that Kūnika asked, "Lord, where will I go after my death?"

Mahāvīra answered, "Instead of asking this of me, ask yourself and hear the answer from within. The one who can answer your query resides within you You have been given the knowledge about heaven and hell. Now ask your inner self where you will go next?"

One who sows wheat will reap only wheat, it cannot be that his harvest will reap millets instead. This is the law of nature. There has never been an exception to this rule, never any change. And through the passage of time, this truth will remain

unchanged that good deeds procure good results and bad deeds procure bad results. [5]

Whether this life is to be a demoniac one or a life divine has to be decided here, within the span of this very lifetime. One who realizes this truth clearly and truly will judge for himself which way to go. If a person has led a saintly life, then his next lifetime will be a blessed one. But if he has brought tears and grief to others around him and laughed at their pain, then such a person far from being a saint, is a demon. And what can be the destiny of such a person? He will be bereft of blessings and ridiculed in the moments of his suffering. Tell me, does he deserve better?

The desire is for heaven but if deeds are fiendish, then can one attain heaven? Wherever a person may be in this world, if his thoughts are pure, if he has diligently plucked out the thorns that have fallen in his path, if empathy has blossomed in his heart over the tears of another, then he will surely attain heaven.

Therefore, look at your life and introspect, and you will know what is going to become of your next life. Many persons who meet me ask, "What are we going to become in our next life?" I answer, "You don't need a seer to know your next three lives." But they are not convinced and believe that if they asked Sīmandhara Svāmī, they would get an answer. And I explain, "Why do you even need to go to Sīmandhara Svāmī? Whatever he says is based on the karmas. He will only reiterate what Lord Mahāvīra has expounded. And you have to invest your faith in that."

Lord Mahāvīra has expounded the theory of why a soul takes birth as a human, animal, celestial or hellish being. There is no new knowledge to be gained there. Therefore, a person can have no difficulty in knowing about his next three lives.

Scan your life until now and you will see that you have reaped as you have sown. He who has not done anything earlier will not get anything now, and he who does nothing in this moment gets nothing in the future. In this manner, the accounts of sins and

---

5 sucinnā kammā sucinnaphalā bhavaṁti, ducinnā kammā ducinnaphalā bhavaṁti – Aupapātika Sūtra 71

virtues of three lifetimes are obvious right away. We don't need a seer to know them. Through time immemorial, good deeds have procured good results and bad deeds, bad results.

Thus King Kūṇika inquired about his afterlife from Lord Mahāvīra and the Lord replied, "the answer to this query lies within yourself." But when Kūnika persisted on having his query answered, the Lord said, "Oh king, when you leave this body, you will go to the sixth hell."

Kūṇika was devastated when he heard this. All his hopes were shattered. He was hoping that the Lord would mention a higher heaven. But the Lord whom he had asked the question was not one to humour a king. He wanted to buy the heavens from Mahāvīra, but heavens cannot be bought with coins nor with external religious pretence.

Kūnika was astonished. He exclaimed, "Lord! I am such an ardent devotee of yours! Then why will I go to hell?"

But the question is - when did he become a devotee? Did he think about that? He who held his father captive, in whose flame the entire family was engulfed, who did not set any limit upon his desires and remained trapped in the fetters of possessiveness, where else can he go but to hell?

So, the most important thing is that a man who desires heaven and liberation must set a limit upon his earthly desires, conquer his passions and lead a life of contentment. Then his spirit is free from the fear of the future - he need ask no one about it. Lord Mahāvīra said:

Examine your duties and see what you have done, what you are doing and what you ought to be doing?

Remember, your wrong doings will not change the map of your life; only good deeds can bring about a change in your life. The God of one's life is within. The enlightened ones have always taught that if you want to love God, then first find out whether you love his children or not? If you cannot love his children, then how can you ever love him?

Someone once said, "Lord! I aspire neither for country nor kingdom, not even fame or worldly respect. All I desire is that even if I go to hell, I may remember your name." He whose heart is overflowing with devotion becomes so intense in it that even if someone tells him that he will go to hell, his only response will be, "Let me go to hell a thousand times, but may my love for the Lord never leave my heart. If my heart is alight with the eternal flame of God's love, then even the dungeons of hell will be illumined."

But Kūṇika's devotion was not a true one It was born out of the need to revive his image and to find a place in heaven Can heaven be attained thus?

What this means is that the desire for possessions results in the downfall of man. Wherever man is overcome by possessiveness, his life is filled with darkness He may think that he is bringing wealth under his control But actually, he is falling prey to his desire. He neither belongs to himself nor to his family nor to anyone else. Neither can he redeem himself nor another. Defeated from all spheres, he loves no one and is loved by none. He becomes the object of universal hatred.

Thus we see that trapped in the web of possessiveness, a person loses his sanity. Like a plague, it ravages him. Like a drug, it enslaves him. He is obsessed with his bank balances and account books. His desires keep on multiplying. Neither his family gets anything from him nor the community or nation. He is unable to attend to the needs and problems of those around him His sole aim is to fill his coffers. The scriptures call such a person a dummy. The farmer places a scarecrow in the centre of the field to scare away birds and animals. After all, it just has the face of a man, it is not human As the proverb goes:

The scarecrow of the field neither feeds others nor himself.

Similarly, what kind of a person is he who neither enjoys his own wealth, nor lets others benefit from it? He has the face of man, but not the heart of man. Humane qualities have deserted him, he is inert.

When the empathy towards one's fellow beings awakens, then inertia will disappear. As long as there is greed and loot in the world, the soul of humanity becomes dulled and sullied. The tendency of possessiveness ruins lives Hence, do not ruin your lives by chasing possessions, do not confuse your desires for needs. He who adopts the Jaina ideal of *icchā parimāṇa* or *parigraha parimāṇa* finds the pathway to infinite joy.

The Flame of Avarice

THE FLAME OF AVARICE

All lakes have shores, but the lake of desire is such that it has no shore - no beginning, no end. It is limitless.

Mahāvīra's disciple, Ānanda, adopted *parigraha parimāṇa vrata* - the vow of limiting possessions. The implication of adopting this vow is to take charge of a life that is unrestrained, where desires are endless and where greed knows no bounds. The aim is to bring order into such an existence by curtailing the flow of desires and wants.

Man, in his ignorance, prolongs his life cycles by falling under the spell of desires. In pursuit of these desires, he gets sucked into the quicksand of want and greed. Every time he goes through the ordeal of fulfilling one desire, another crops up and then yet another.

Thus, greed is the root of all conflicts, be it within a family, or one that involves an entire nation. Until this tendency is removed, passions are restrained, the inner strength to destroy desires is cultivated, and thereby, the vow of *parigraha parimāṇa* followed, conflict and disharmony will prevail. Without recognizing this root cause of conflicts, any hope of a harmonious and peaceful existence is but an illusion.

The greatest of thinkers have spread the light of knowledge, but the darkness caused by greed has not been dispelled. The

world today is trapped in that very darkness. Yes, it is true that man has claimed stake even on electric power with which the world has been illuminated, but that light is just external. The inner self is wrapped in complete darkness. Spellbound by external glitter, man has given up all attempts to dispel that inner darkness By listening to the discourses of great saints he has no doubt found the way to that inner light. But alas! His lack of *sādhanā* has not allowed that light to brighten his dark world.

Many great kings and emperors made efforts to establish peace, but did not succeed Man has reached great heights in the world of science, he has built aeroplanes, rockets, even atom bombs, but peace has always deluded him

When explosives were invented in Europe, people assumed that fear of mass destruction would avert wars. Later, when tanks and jet planes were invented, the same hope was rekindled Subsequently, every destructive invention was justified with the same empty reassurances of peace But in reality, today we are in the midst of wars that are bigger and far more destructive than ever before.

Earlier battles were fair in as much as they involved only soldiers on both sides, but now there is no value for civilian life too! Weapons in the past had limited powers, today there is no limit A small bomb is activated and many lives meet their end So, where is the end to war?

Newer endeavours are made to destroy the world at large. In many countries, wars have become a way of life where, before one battle is resolved, the dark clouds of another loom large on the horizon. Before one battle ends, preparations for another begin Violence perpetrates vengeance

And so it is that today man has the power to destroy the whole of mankind And in his vanity, he believes that war and subjugation are the means to achieving world peace. I ask you, is this the way to find peace? No, never! But such is the situation today the world over.

A cloth stained with blood cannot be cleaned with blood. It

is common knowledge that water and not blood washes away bloody stains. But this knowledge has not seeped into man's actions and therefore he continues to try washing away blood with blood.

The vision of life is lost. Loot, conflict, agitation and war are the order of the day. The cause of all this is the plague of possessiveness which has afflicted both rich and poor countries alike. All wars today are a result of restlessness born from the urge to possess more and more. In earlier times, battles were fought for fame or marriage alliances. But not anymore Today wars are neither fought for prestige nor are they the means to expand empires. The aim of modern day war is to create markets, so that super powers of the world may exert total control over third world nations thereby depriving them of their economic independence

Caught in this web of possessiveness, a nation is not just bent upon taking advantage of another, but even within itself, it sets the stage for rivalry among different sections of society. Thus the endless conflict between labourers and employers, between the haves and the have-nots is becoming more vicious with each passing day.

What is the reason for such bitter class conflicts? It is the avarice for possessions that makes one class fill up its coffers at the expense of another, ignoring the needs of those less fortunate Where is the end to all this?

Until the tendency to possess is not diminished, the strife in today's world will not end. Unless every nation adopts the policy of *parigraha parimāṇa,* this gory game will continue. Lord Mahāvīra and many other great seers have rightly said that possessiveness is the root cause of strife, and non-possessiveness the path of peace. The venerable Mahāvīra taught:

Anger spoils good relations, pride destroys humility, deceit destroys amity and greed destroys everything. [1]

When anger enters, love exits, eliminating all affection in

1 koho pīiṁ panāsei, māno vinaya nāsano māyā mittāni nāsei, lobho savva vināsano – Daśvaikālika Sūtra 8 38

a person. Such a person who is roused by pride loses all sense of humility, modesty and respect for elders. A stone might melt, but not such a person. Treachery and duplicity crushes the best of friendships. As long as simplicity exists in a family, each member of that family understands and nurtures the other. Their lives are like an open book. Bonds of friendship are strong and there is joy in abundance. But when treachery and deceit take over, friendships are splintered.

When avarice is roused, neither love remains, nor humility, nor modesty. A greedy person will misuse another for every single rupee. Thus it is man's desire which shreds humanity into pieces, crushing all the goodness of life. In the presence of avarice, the larger vision of life never evolves. During one of his discourses on the topic of avarice, Lord Mahāvīra said:

Greed destroys everything. While other negative qualities eliminate positive qualities one by one, greed destroys all qualities.

The more lowly a man's thoughts are, the sooner he moves towards self-destruction. The loftier his thoughts, the nearer he is to peace and harmony. It is in large-heartedness that happiness and contentment reside.

Can joy and peace be found in the realm of greed and possessiveness? The answer is again a big 'No'. A greedy person can never experience peace. Yet, man has done nothing to sedate this avarice within himself. On the contrary, he has indulged his mind in further avarice. It is akin to cleaning a blood stained cloth with blood. But can that ever succeed?

When a pot of milk is kept over a flame, it has to boil over. That is its property. You may postpone the spilling of the milk by periodically sprinkling water over it, but ultimately it will boil over. The only way to avoid it is by putting off the flame.

In this context, I remember a story from Punjab. Once upon a time there was a group of nomads. Like any other day, they loaded their camelbacks with bundles of wares and set off. As evening fell, they pitched their tents in an open field and

unloaded the bundles from the camelbacks. Now, among these nomads, one of them started thinking, "It is night time, and dark. If we fall asleep, someone may take away our bundles." So he tied the bundles together with a rope and tied the rope to his legs and fell asleep.

Truly enough, a band of thieves came at midnight and co-incidentally reached out for the bundles that he had tied to himself. As they started moving the bundles, he woke up and asked, "Hey, who is that?" His friends who were asleep beside him thought, as the popular belief goes, that he was muttering in his sleep because he must have had his hand on his chest. So with their eyes closed, they said to him, "Chant Rāma...Rāma... Rāma." In other words, remember God and you will sleep well. To this he retorted, "If they stop dragging me, only then can I think of God. If they don't stop, how can I sleep in peace?"

The point is the same. Unless the fire is put out, how can the milk be prevented from overflowing? Greed has to be curtailed for peace to prevail.

What is man doing today? The fire of greed burns his very existence out of control. If you try to calm it by talks of renunciation and detachment, it may subside for a while, but until it is not extinguished, how can everlasting peace be found? Even the fulfilment of desires cannot lead to lasting peace, because desires are endless.

The wealth in this world is limited, but man's desires are unlimited. Can unlimited desires be satisfied by limited wealth? Can you ever fill a pond large enough to hold gallons of water with a few handfuls? Lord Mahāvīra has explained this beautifully:

The more you get, the more you want; desire increases with every gain. What starts as just two grams of gold has a tendency to end as millions of grams. [2]

In this Sūtra, we find the essence of life. Herein lies the key to success. Profit and greed fuel each other. The more the profit,

2 jahā lāho tahā loho, lāhā loho pavaḍḍhai domāsakayam kajjaṁ, koḍie vi na ṇiṭiṭhıyaṁ – Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 8.17

the more the greed for more profit. In such a scenario, where is peace, where is rest?

Take the example of *Maharṣi* Kapila. In his piteous state of poverty, even two grams of gold was a lot. It was all he wished for. Let me tell you about it

Once there was a king who had announced to his subjects that whoever arrived first at the palace gate every morning would receive two grams of gold So every morning there would be countless subjects trying to reach the palace first, drawn by their greed for the grams of gold. The one who got his name written first was lucky for that day. The rest had to return disappointed.

Was this charity or a ridicule of charity? But let us not spend time on this analysis. True charity is in giving up attachment, not in such pretentious acts, which only kindle the fire of greed among people.

Coming back to the story, whenever Kapila went to the king's court, he returned empty handed. But it is a universal truth that hope is eternal Kapila struggled for months to get those two grams of gold

One day his wife rebuked him for how lazy he was by saying, "If you don't wake up early, how will you reach in time to get that gold? It is your laziness that keeps the gold out of your reach."

Kapila agreed sheepishly, "You are right Okay, wake me up early. Let me reach before the others."

Saying this he went to bed, determined to rise early But his sleep was a disturbed one Somewhere around midnight, he awoke thinking it was daybreak and set out towards the palace. Seeing him wandering at that unearthly hour aroused the suspiscion of the guards and they arrested him.

Kapila pleaded repeatedly, "I am neither a thief, nor a dacoit. I have just come for the two grams of gold!" But none heeded his words. "Is this the time for gold?" they quizzed him with suspicion and locked him in prison.

In the morning, Kapila was brought into the king's court. His clothes were tattered and his eyes were dark pools of despair. As soon as the king saw him, he realized that here was a poor man who must have come for the gold, but was caught inadvertently

So the king asked Kapila, "Why were you wandering about in the night?"

Kapila answered, "*Annadātā*, I have been wandering for months, but have not got the gold. So today I came early hoping to get the gold, but these guards caught me They have beaten me mercilessly." Saying this, Kapila broke down

The king asked kindly, "Two grams of gold is not much at all Tell me brother, what do you actually need in life?"

This set Kapila thinking. "What shall I ask for? Two grams of gold. But will that be enough? Why not ask for a kilogram or two? But that too will get over soon enough! May be ten or twenty kilograms, so that I can make enough jewellery for my wife. Then our life will be peaceful. But does my hut befit such wealth? Why not ask for a palace as well? But what is a palace without estates? Better to ask for a village. But just one village? If I have to ask, I'd might as well ask for a state!" And thus we see how man's desires are endless

Kapila's desires kept increasing. At last, when a state also seemed less to him, he decided to ask the king for his kingdom Look at the web of desires!

Suddenly he came to his senses. As soon as he thought about asking for the kingdom, light dawned within him. The contemplation on gold turned into self-contemplation.

Kapila started thinking, "Oh, what has become of me! A great man has shown kindness towards me and in return, I wish to possess his entire wealth. How can I stoop so low? It is not appropriate to misuse someone's generosity."

Thus, Kapila entered into a deep meditative contemplation. The delay in his reply filled the king's mind with suspicion. He

thought, "This man is thinkıng hard. I hope he is not considering asking for my throne!" So he ordered, "State quickly whatever it is that you wish for."

As Kapila opened his eyes, he saw the king's anxiety and realized that his greed had aroused suspiscion in the king's heart. He was consumed by repentance and began to think, "Once there was no greed in me, and now that it has crept in, it fills every pore. All I wanted were two grams of gold. But the king said, 'ask for whatever you desire' and the desire became so strong that it was ready to take the entire kingdom from the king. Shame on a mind which cannot contain its desires!"

This desire is like a fire whose flames are fanned by the fuel of greed. Fat does not put out fire, it ignites it. Likewise, the fire of desire can be extinguished not by greed, but only by contentment.

The wisdom that dawned to destroy this greed from its roots set the man on the path of *aparigraha*. Today he is known to the world as *Maharṣi* Kapila.

One day *Maharṣi* Kapila saw a band of five hundred bandits. Their lives spoke of violence and bloodshed. They had never experienced love, compassion and trust. The light of the *Maharṣi's* words engulfed them and they became his disciples. And one day, that same group of great saints started spreading the message of peace in the world.

Let me narrate an incident from China. Confucius, the wise one, was once approached by the king with a problem. "There is a lot of thievery in the kingdom. Kindly suggest a way to put an end to it", the king implored.

Confuciu s said, "If you really wish to put an end to theft in the kingdom, then first of all you must stop stealing yourself. Don't let your greed grow. Because of your greed you extract money out of your people to fill your coffers. The day you set your mind free of deceit, thievery and greed, from that very day these thefts will stop too."

I believe that the root cause of all evil lies within us. In

this world, wealth is limited and desires unlimited. Until we endeavour to rid ourselves of the venom of greed, we cannot find peace. Lord Mahāvīra said:

If there were innumerable mountains of gold and silver as vast as Mount Kailāśa, they would not satisfy an avaricious man; for avarice is boundless like the sky.[3]

Take the case of a greedy man who propitiates a deity by worship. The deity is pleased and grants him a generous boon. He asks for wealth. So God creates for him heaps of gold and silver on earth. High and vast as the Himalayas and the Sumeru, not just one or two, but innumerable mountains of wealth. He could keep counting them till the end of his life, but not reach their end.

After creating so much wealth, if God were to ask him whether he was satisfied, do you know what the greedy man would reply? He would say, "I will be at peace if you can create one more mountain of gold in yet another corner." One who nurtures greed is never satisfied by these heaps of gold and silver. Any amount of wealth is but miniscule for him. His desires will increase further, because desires are infinite. So, how can a pit of infinite desires be filled by limited wealth?

A saint during one of his wanderings met a man who was very greedy. He later put his disciple to test by saying, "Today I have seen a lake with neither a bank nor a shore. Tell me how that is possible."

Immediately the devout disciple replied, "Master! What you have seen is possible. It is certainly not impossible."

Testing him further, the Master asked, "How can this not be an impossibility? If there is a lake, there must be a shore. How can there be a lake without a shore?"

The disciple answered, "Master! All lakes have shores, but the lake of desire is such that it has no shore, no beginning. It is limitless."

3 suvannaruppassa u pavvayā bhave, siyā hu kelāsasamā asaṁkhayā.
narassa luddhassa na tehi kiṁci, icchā hu āgāsasamā aṇaṁtiyā –
Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 9.48

The Master smiled contentedly, "You have reached the right understanding You have grasped true knowledge."

Verily, even on getting the wealth of the entire universe, the mind of a greedy man will not find contentment. This is the truth of life. It is the nature of desire that it can never be satisfied. One who attempts to satisfy every desire does not tread the right path Satisfaction of desires is not the path of spirituality, it is the path of materialism and never begets peace

Jainism states that desires cannot be satisfied by gaining wealth and objects. Possession of an object does not necessarily satisfy the desire for that object. When the fire of desire starts to kindle, sprinkle the waters of contentment on it If your mind is content, even your desires will fold and fit into a corner. This is the way to eradicate desires

If you move ahead in your life with such a view, then you will understand the vow of non-possessiveness Imagine that a king or a millionaire voluntarily embraces poverty In the presence of all means of wealth and comfort, he restrains his desires and adopts poverty and austerity as his way of life Such a man has truly understood the vow of non-possessiveness If poverty is not accepted voluntarily, but imposed by fate, it cannot bring about peace. Poverty which is self-imposed gives birth to true and absolute non-possessiveness

Look at Lord Mahāvīra himself He was born in a royal family and lived in the lap of luxury for thirty years of his life. Yet he found no peace. Had he found peace, he would never have left his home

On the contrary, those who think that Mahāvīra left because of a sense of emptiness or *śūnya*, have not understood his inner calling in its completeness

In this world, we always see two extremes - abundance of wealth on one side and empty pits on the other. While people fall sick due to gluttony, others often die of starvation. Some have so many clothes that they cannot bear their weight while others can barely afford to cover themselves. In the same vein,

some live in palaces of gold while many do not have a roof over their heads.

One who enjoys the pleasures of material abundance is not justified to preach contentment and non-possessiveness. If you reside in a palace of gold and give lectures on sacrifice and renunciation, it is nothing short of a joke. One who has eaten well cannot sermonize about the significance of fasting to those who have not seen food for days. It would only be a cruel joke and not the way to establish peace. There will be peace in the minds of people when they see their leader as one among them. It is then that the minds of people will experience an awakening, a transformation, and the need to follow in the footsteps of their leader.

This was Mahāvīra's viewpoint. He renounced the palace of his own free will, adorned the *sādhu's* garb and adopted the life of a mendicant. He did not even keep a thread to his name. Such renunciation is self-willed and great.

Buddha did the same. He also did not find peace as long as he was in the midst of luxuries. When he adorned the garb of a *sādhu*, he found peace in his heart His voice then reverberated into the hearts of the masses and they followed his every footstep.

On the contrary, take the example of King Janaka of the Upaniṣadic period. He did not have a long-lasting effect on the masses. The flames of sacrifice and renunciation glow in his words in the Upaniṣads, but they are short-lived. The lamp burns, but is soon snuffed out. The reason for this is that he sat on the throne and spoke of non-dualism and the supreme soul. He preached about renunciation while he himself was seated on a luxurious throne of power.

Long before Mahāvīra uttered them, such pearls of wisdom have been mentioned in the Vedānta, that this world is momentary, perishing; but the Vedāntic preachers could not kindle the feelings of sacrifice within themselves. They entered the courts of the kings and emperors and left with thousands of golden-horned cows in exchange for their discourses. No wonder then, that they could not instill this great message into

the hearts of those whom they taught. In this present corrupt age, the *kaliyuga*, words of renunciation and sacrifice from those who are entangled in desires seem ludicrous. One Ācārya of Vedānta has said:

In this *kaliyuga*, vedantins stand out conspicuously like cranes in the month of *phalguna*.[4]

In *phālguna*, the white crane stands out conspicuously against the backdrop of dark clouds. In this month, the festival of *holī* is also a strange sight where children and adults alike, in their frenzy of enjoyment, do absurd things like riding a donkey and wearing bizarre clothes. Talks of renunciation sound as absurd in today's world.

What the Ācārya meant is that one who does not practice what he preaches cannot reach out and touch the heart of the masses. As a learned scholar, he can make a detailed analysis, he may render others speechless with his powerful arguments, but he cannot bring about a transformation if he does not have the wisdom and compassion to support his knowledge. It is not knowledge alone that can bring about a spiritual revolution. Such transformation can be initiated only by wisdom.

Lord Mahāvīra placed his own example before the masses. He who lived in palaces, who was praised lavishly by the thousands who received bountiful arms from him every morning, decided to embrace renunciation. As he arrived at the decision, he gave away all his riches as charity, and thus weightless, appeared before the people. When this prince, now a mendicant, appeared amidst the crowds, thousands of people followed him in one single voice of faith.

What this means is that one who believes he can solve the problems of the world without giving up the desire for possessions is deluding himself. In truth, he will meet only defeat and pessimism, for life without sacrifice is *śūnya*, a void.

In saying so, I refer to both the ascetic and the householder. The ascetic who wishes to be true to himself will adopt the vow

4 kalau vedāntino bhānti phalgune bālakā iva.

of non-possessiveness completely and not just at a superficial level. Having conquered his desire for possessions, he will see no difference between a king and a beggar, the rich and the poor. On the other hand, the one who feigns simplicity but favours the rich and is enamoured by their wealth has obviously not left behind his own possessive nature. For him, grass and gold are yet not the same. One who is detached is not impressed by the display of wealth. It is he who makes an impact on the world by his chaste actions and pure thoughts.

Unlike the ascetic, a householder who dwells within the confines of society cannot renounce all possessions. Yet, he must limit his desires, his actions and his needs to the bare minimum. He must also learn to limit his habits of eating, dressing, owning property, even raising pets and such other worldly traits.

Complete renunciation is the framework of an ascetic's existence and to set a limit on desires is that of the layperson's. To set a limit means to give up excesses that cross the boundaries of necessities.

One who can give up possessions or even limit them is a true aspirant.

Non-Possessiveness and Charity

NON-POSSESSIVENESS AND CHARITY

What we impose upon ourselves beyond our bare necessities adds to the burden of life. Even austerities are burdensome if they are adopted more due to external pressures rather than out of a voluntary and natural inclination to do so.

The principle of non-possessiveness is the life-breath of Jainism and the core of all religions.

In the journey of our life, we don't travel empty-handed. We travel with possessions - things that we have accumulated for our comfort, for our happiness, sometimes for no reason at all. One important question in our journey through life is - should we travel with maximum weight or with minimum baggage? Which of these is better for us? Will the journey be more joyous with more belongings or will it be easier with less?

Look at this familiar scene. We pack our bags before a journey, taking along whatever we think we need. You think, "If I fall sick on the way, isn't it better to carry medicines?" Not knowing which disease might inflict you, you carry an entire medical kit. Similarly, you carry eatables and utensils far

beyond your needs. Then your mind turns to clothing and you think, "Should I not to be prepared for changes in weather?" You pack in cotton clothes for warm weather, and thick blankets and woollens in case of cold weather.

Then the thought occurs, "What if something gets stolen? Better to pack one more of each thing." In the process everything is duplicated.

Thus, uncontrolled imagination increases the baggage of life. You justify your possessiveness by believing that you are preparing yourself for the most unpredictable of situations, be it regarding food, medicine or clothes. Now, if you embark on your journey carrying all these belongings, can you have a pleasant trip? Will your steps be heavy or light? Obviously they will be heavy. You will soon be soaked in sweat and panting for breath. In all probability, you will unburden your weight on somebody else's shoulders.

Contrary to this, there is that other traveller who carries nothing but bare necessities. He does not imagine needs nor carry more than what is required. His steps are therefore lighter, and his journey pleasant. He reaches his destination easily enough.

Life is a journey too. Having come into this world, we do realize that life is not stagnant but ever flowing from the first breath. The question is, during the transition from childhood to youth, does the traveller of life carry the burden of his desires or does he travel light? And in this question lies the essence of the vow of non-possessiveness.

What we impose upon ourselves beyond our bare necessities adds to the burden of life. This is true of religious norms, rules and vows also. Austerities are burdensome if they are adopted more due to external pressures rather than out of a natural inclination to do so. No doubt, vows such as those of non-violence and truthfulness benefit our lives greatly and help in resolving life's problems. But they have to evolve from within. If imposed, they will only hinder one's spiritual evolution. Instead of travelling higher and higher, one is weighed down by them as if tied to a stone in water.

If a stone is dropped into water, it sinks to the bottom and remains there for years without ever dissolving in the water. It remains a separate entity from the very water in which it lies. On the other hand, if you put a lump of sugar in water, it will instantly dissolve and lend its own sweetness to the water.

The same is true of austerities in life. Those vows of self-discipline which weigh down on life like the stone in water without enhancing or enriching the inner self are not true austerities. In ancient times, many such austerities were practiced, but Jainism rebelled against them for they were believed to be modes of bodily punishment, rather than means of achieving true happiness and joy.

True strength of character must be cultivated and until that happens, man's liberation is not possible. We have to weave truth, non-violence and non-possessiveness into the fibre of our being. The aspirant who will limit his needs will stay away from deceit, untruth and violence. The vow of non-possessiveness is therefore mandatory for an aspirant.

In nurturing this vow, we nurture the true meaning of life. We have to be conscious of two factors regarding possessions; the first being the reason for acquiring material comforts and the second being limiting them within one's needs. When we forget these two factors and accumulate out of sheer greed, life becomes a burden. Then, the only aim that remains in life is material accumulation. And I ask you - of what use is it to life? How does it enhance the quality of life?

Mohammed Ghazni came to India, plundered and looted her wealth but was so busy accumulating that he was never able to enjoy it. When during the last hours of his life, he asked for the plunder to be brought before him, one question tormented him. "Why did I plunder and destroy to acquire this heap of wealth? Of what use is it to me?"

Indeed, these are pertinent questions and in them lie the answers to salvation. And fortunate are those who ask themselves such questions early in their lives.

One who does not question the aim of accumulation ends up losing focus and becomes oblivious to all other aspects of life. He neglects his family, society, nation and himself as well. He is hungry, but does not eat. He is tired, but does not rest. He earns more and more; earning becomes an obsession with him. He has no idea where his goal lies. He loses himself in the maze of possessions. Can such a man take care of others? Can he ever take time to tend to the needs of his family? To such a man, can the community and nation ever matter?

Once during *caturmāsa*, we set up residence next to a mansion. The owner of that mansion lived abroad and a watchman was appointed to take care of the mansion. He was paid well and it was said that he also had some personal wealth. But he always projected an image of poverty. He would eat just roasted gram in front of us, trying to evoke our sympathy by saying that he could afford no more.

We were obviously sorry to see his torn clothes, his meagre meals and his ageing condition. Much later we realized that the reason for his pathetic appearance was not poverty, but his thrifty nature.

It is not poverty, but miserliness which is dreadful.

Some days later, the watchman fell ill. He took no medicines neither did he consult a physician. Often he remained unconscious. The people said, "Looks like his end is near. Let us make arrangements for him to be laid to rest "

But there were some wise people in the town who believed that the authorities should be informed about his condition. They were concerned that the townsfolk would be questioned regarding the personal property of the man in the event of his demise.

So, the local government body was informed. To the utter shock of the Tahsildar himself, a sum of rupees five thousand along with some jewels was found locked in the old man's possession. So much of wealth and yet such a piteous state?

So the Tahsildar advised him, "Give away how much ever

of your wealth you wish towards charity. Whatever remains will become government property and will be put to good use."

All those who were gathered around him encouraged him to follow the advice of the good Tahsildar. They said to him lovingly, "Brother! Since you have no inheritors and your end is near, don't lose this golden opportunity to do some good."

But this only aggravated him He questioned with irritation, "Why do you want to kill me before my time? What if I do survive? What will I eat then?"

The people exclaimed, "Oh! What have you eaten so far? All you have done is accumulate money. You have hardly ever eaten a complete meal!"

When the Tahsildar tried to place a rupee in his hand to motivate him, he simply pocketed it. Some days later when he died, his wealth was made government property. Of what use was all his accumulation?

Some people alienate themselves from society and nation and stay isolated. And some are worse than that. They remain aloof even from their own selves, not even bothering to fulfil their bodily needs. Great thinkers propound that even if the boundary of desires is not set, one must give away all extra possessions as charity. They believe that to earn all the wealth in the world and give it away as charity is a meritorious deed.

But Lord Mahāvīra had a much larger vision. According to him, such a vision of charity is not a sublime one. To accumulate on one hand and then give back on the other can only fan the ego, nothing else. In other words, to first take from people and then return it back to them, is not to give of oneself. And furthermore, the ratio between what is taken and what is given is always an unfair one. This does not qualify as charity.

Jainism has placed great emphasis on charity, but the primary emphasis is on non-possessiveness. Charity is to wash away the grime that has stuck to the feet, but non-possessiveness is not to allow the grime to stick to the feet at all.[1]

1 prakṣālanāddhi paṅkasya dūrādasparśanaṁ varam

The moralists say that if grime has stuck to the feet, it should be washed away immediately. Do not let it remain. But the better thing is to avoid such a situation. Likewise, to control one's desires and to adopt the vow of non-possessiveness is the best path. But until one is ready for that path, it is at least better to wash away the grime of accumulation by doing charity. Of course, in charity, the risk of becoming arrogant is high since one is revered so much. In non-possessiveness, there is no such risk because it arises only from simplicity.

Therefore, Jainism propounds that one must put a brake on desires. One must learn to stop or at the very least, regulate the vehicle of life, which meanders aimlessly and without limits, crushing others in its way. However, one can cause injury to others and then condone that act by applying balm on their wounds. But this is not life's ideal.

Do you know that in olden days, a special medicine known as *mumāi* was made from human blood? A man would be tied and hung upside-down. A wound would then be inflicted on his head so that his blood dropped into a container below.

After the required amount of blood was collected for the *mumāi*, the man would be untied, fed well and nurtured back to good health. And then the process would be repeated for more blood.

The above example is to illustrate that hurting people and then bandaging them cannot be a part of *sādhanā*. Nor is it correct to first cheat others, deprive them and then do charity to pat one's ego. It is far superior to adopt the vow of non-possessiveness, to give up all that is dear, to stop deceit, theft and exploitation. Sacrifice has always been considered superior to charity.

If your mind has not yet evolved to the extent that you can completely ignore all of life's needs, you can at least begin by short-listing them. It would indeed be tragic if you spent most of your life only chasing material wealth without realizing any sublime goals in life. Does it ever happen that a person goes to the market without knowing what he wants to buy? Do we not make a list of what we require from the market?

Such a list of one's needs and an organized method should be adopted even in life. Whether Lord Mahāvīra was approached by an aspirant, a king or a beggar, his simple message was the same to all - to understand one's needs. This is the vow of non-possessiveness for an aspirant - *icchā parimāṇa vrata*. However, even up to this day, we have not understood how to list out our needs and so we go about in circles as though blindfolded.

Once needs are listed, greed will be harnessed and exploitation will come to an end. Those who walk such a path live a life of enrichment. On the other hand, those who do not harness their needs spend their lives trying to fulfil them, very much like a blindfolded man without direction.

Think of a man who starts a cloth store. When he profits from it, he thinks of investing his money in another venture in order to earn more money. He opens another shop; this time a provision store. He begins to earn a lot more and is drawn into the vicious cycle of greed. The more he earns, the more he wants. And thus, one day, the person who began with a humble store becomes the owner of the entire market. He is now like Kubera, the Lord of wealth.

There are many such people who tell me about their ventures. I listen to all of them. They think that they are exhibiting their brilliance, and I am always left wondering that if they have acquired so much, what have they left for others? Such is the greed of man that he cannot see beyond his own desires.

Have you ever pondered why this is so? It is because man believes that his worldly possessions are the yardstick by which he will be gauged in society. A liar is ashamed when his lies are exposed; a thief is aware that he is a criminal; a pleasure-seeking person is always trying to hide his hedonism. But a possessive person does not consider himself a sinner, nor does he hide his possessive tendencies. On the other hand, he is proud of himself. Society also looks up to such people and reveres them. Great respect is given to those who exhibit their riches and the splendour of their lives. At any gathering, those who exhibit their possessions are treated with more respect. What an irony! Our

ascetics who have renounced all possessions are also impressed and influenced by such people. In their lectures and talks, they do not hesitate to praise their wealthy patrons. In fact, they refer to them as blessed souls!

When the spiritual masters themselves place the sin of possessiveness on the throne of virtue, how can they direct the common man away from possessiveness? When leaders are trapped in such weaknesses, how can one expect any better from their followers? No wonder then, that the masses cannot even comprehend that possessiveness is a sin and non-possessiveness a virtue.

By excluding possessiveness from the category of sin, we are reducing to mere slogans the words of Lord Mahāvīra and all that the scriptures say. If the vow of possessiveness can be violated and not considered a sin, then what about the other four vows of non-violence, truthfulness, chastity and non-stealing? Can they be violated as well? If possessiveness has been masked with an aura of virtue in the present day, then isn't it time we stopped using words such as 'virtue' and 'vice' since we do not truly believe in their distinction?

I think that in this manner, to consider a vice as a merit is detrimental to humanity at large. It becomes the cause of man's decline. It is the root cause of revolts and conflicts. Until man does not accept possessiveness as a sin, he cannot be liberated, he cannot evolve, and there will be no end to the unrest that seizes him.

So where was I before I digressed? Ah, yes! I was telling you about people who talk to me about their wealth and possessions with great pride. They boast about the expanse of their business, the number of shops they own etc. Once they gain control over the local market, they spread their business to other cities. They subsequently open their shops and firms in large metros like Bombay and Calcutta. Obviously then, if every small merchant begins to accumulate at such a large level, the tendency towards economic exploitation is bound to increase.

To curtail this tendency, we have to adopt Mahāvīra's vow of limitations. It teaches that one's best interest lies in setting a limit on the expansion of one's business and the extent of energy one must invest in it.

Some of you may ask, "How do we decide when we can make an exception to these vows and rules?"

Take for example, the *diśā parimāṇa vrata* - the vow of restricting distance for travel. A person who has completed the maximum distance that his vow has permitted for the day sees a woman being molested about ten steps ahead. What should he do in such a critical situation? Should he cross his limit or remain an on-looker? This is not a new question.

I remember an incident about the gatekeeper of a bungalow. On the door of the bungalow was a signboard that read: Do not enter without permission.

One night a gang of thieves slipped past the gate and made for the house. On seeing this, the guard ran after them. But before he could nab them, the thieves had broken in. As he reached the door, he saw the signboard and stood transfixed, not daring to go inside, thereby allowing the thieves to escape with their loot.

The vows of limitation described in the scriptures are not meant to be adopted in such a senseless manner. Once you take the vow you are prohibited from crossing your limits with regard to the five *āśravas*.[2] But if crossing it for the welfare of another is necessary, then the vow of restricting distance should not become an obstacle. For the welfare of humanity, one must exercise one's discretion and wisdom with regard to these vows.

The purpose of the vow of restricting distance is for man to set physical limits on himself so that he can mark out the

---

2 āśrava refers to the influx of karmas which are the cause of bondage. Mithyātva (false belief or ignorance), avirati (vowlessness), pramāda (laziness), kaṣāya (the four passions of anger, pride, deceit and greed) and yogā (activities of body, mind and speech) are the primary causes of the influx of karma Collectively, these causes are called āśrava

boundaries of his material existence. This is to create a state of readiness in him for a higher spiritual purpose.

Today the world is in turmoil as the increasing greed for power among nations has swept all sense and sensitivity away. Every nation is trying to take advantage of the smallest of wars between other countries to fill its own coffers. This is the ugly face of possessiveness.

In the past, greed was not as unleashed as it is nowadays. If a country discovers an oil well, or another a diamond mine, all other nations immediately wish to take possession of it. Trade and accumulation are the chief aims of all wars today.

It is in these tumultuous days that the message of Lord Mahāvīra brings a ray of hope. His message clearly states that you must put the brakes on your needs. In doing so you will never breach the territory of another and cause havoc. This is an important point and it is from this that the vow of non-possessiveness springs forth. Unless you stop accumulating beyond your needs, how can you adopt this great vow?

The next step is that of charity. Charity is the repentance for accumulation of wealth. In the context of charity, I stress on the word 'repentance'. When you give charity, do not think of it as a favour. If charity is done either for fame, or to gain respect, it is not praiseworthy. Such charity does not foster goodwill. It is a noteworthy act only if it is an act of renouncing any particular object. Moreover, charity given from a kind and empathetic heart works as an antidote to hatred and nurtures goodwill. Selfless charities help uplift societies and nations.

There once lived a king who had an able minister to assist him in the affairs of the state. They were content in most walks of their individual lives, yet they shared one common sorrow. Both of them had no children. The king often remarked to his minister that a home without a child was no home at all. They prayed fervently for a child, but to no avail.

Once, a monk arrived in their city. His wisdom and intuition inspired the people and they flocked in thousands to seek his

blessings. When the king heard about the saint, his hopes were kindled. He was sure the holy man would help him beget a son. The minister was hopeful too. So they decided to visit the monk. The king bowed before him and solicited his blessings. "Oh Master!" he said. "Bless our homes with sons so that we may find joy. Without a child, all the wealth of this world gives us no pleasure. There is darkness in our hearts, our homes seem gloomy and so does this entire kingdom."

The monk said, "If you want a son, then first you must find the father within yourself; for what use is a son to you if you do not possess paternal feelings?"

The king was baffled. He exclaimed, "Master! How can one be a father in the absence of a child? Until I don't become a father, how can I feel like one?"

Now the holy one asked gently, "Are all your subjects not your children? All through your reign as king, have you not been addressed as a parent by your subjects? Yet, you have not endeared yourself to them as a parent would to his offspring. Therefore, first instill a feeling of affection in your heart. I promise you will find a son who will illumine your name."

He continued, "Make an announcement throughout the kingdom that beggars will be given alms tomorrow."

The next day, all the beggars of the town waited to be fed. When the king and his minister arrived to give away alms in all their finery, the monk said, "If you both set aside your royalty and go before them as ordinary mortals, you will truly understand them and their needs."

Thus, the charity began. But instead of gold and riches, the beggars were given bits of stale *roṭī* as suggested by the wise man. They were astounded. Such meagre charity after such a big announcement! That too from a king? They could not make sense of it. But knowing that they could not argue with the king, they accepted what was given to them as their fate.

As they returned with their meagre alms, the monk awaited

them at the gates of the palace. He told them to give him their *roṭī* and in return he would make them king. When none of them believed him, he asked for half their *roṭī* in return for which he promised to make them a minister.

The beggars said, "Master, why do you make fun of us?" And they moved on, none parting with his *roṭī*, not even with a bit of it. Many beggars later, a young boy passed him. There was a strange light in the boy's eyes.

As he was leaving the gate, he was asked, "What did you get? Are you satisfied with whatever you received?" The boy answered, "This *roṭī* is what I have received and I humbly accept it After all, what else can befit a beggar's destiny?"

The monk thought, "There is the essence of renunciation in this boy's voice. Misfortune may have made him a beggar but his tone implies that he is not a pessimist. I am sure he has faith in the future but at present he is living within the confines of his circumstance " Thus thinking, the holy man said, "Alright son, give me this *roṭī*. I will make you the king."

The boy said innocently, "Whether you make me a king or not, please take this *roṭī*. I came here with great hopes, but I am content with what I have received. However, I will gladly part with it if you need it." The monk asked him to stand aside and wait awhile, while he continued his search among the beggars for another one who would be generous with his *roṭī*. At last, another boy passed by who tore his *roṭī* into half and gave it to the monk

Happy at the end of his search, the monk said to the king and the minister, "Here are the two capable sons that I promised you would have A king should be large-hearted, and willing to sacrifice his all These qualities are evident in the first boy. The *roṭī* was important to him, it was all he had, but unlike the others, he relinquished it without any hesitation. Therefore, he is worthy of being groomed to become the heir-apparent.

"The other boy may not have such generosity; nevertheless he parted with half of his *roṭī*. It is a minister's role to be cautious

and practical in the affairs of the state. Therefore, the second boy is worthy of being the minister's son."

In this story, the king and the minister are analogous to a saint and an aspirant. The message of the holy man is that the temptations of this world are like the pieces of bread. If you relinquish them completely, you will get the saint's throne. If you relinquish even half your desires, you will at least get to be an aspirant, if not a saint.

The spiritual aspirant should be watchful of two factors. First, one must set a limit on material accumulation and secondly, one must nurture the spirit of sharing. One's wealth should be spent in the development of society. Only such an attitude can bring about peace and contentment not just at an individual level, but at a universal level as well.

Attachment
is
Bondage,
Detachment
Liberation

ATTACHMENT IS BONDAGE, DETACHMENT LIBERATION

Detachment to one's possessions is an art to be mastered. Such an art has no pre-requisite of philosophical knowledge or religious rituals. It only requires willingness.

The *sādhanā*, which emerges from within and becomes an integral part of being gives strength and enhances life. But the *sādhanā*, which has been imposed externally, is burdensome and hinders one's progress. Keeping this in mind, when an aspirant sets forth on the spiritual path, he must be ready from within. Only then must he tread this path.

For the aspirant who can effortlessly carry the responsibility of *sādhanā*, there is no question of doing it partially. He treads the path of complete *sādhanā* and is known as a *sādhu*. The aspirant who is caught in his worldly web and therefore cannot manage the circumstances effortlessly, treads the path of partial *sādhanā* and is known as a *śrāvaka*.

Even though the *śrāvaka* treads the path partially, his goal is the same as that of the *sādhu's*. He gradually moves towards complete *sādhanā*. Today we will reflect on the vow of limiting one's desires in the context of *śrāvaka* Ānanda's life.

We must reflect upon the question of what is possessiveness in itself. Is possessiveness restricted to only those objects that are obtainable, or can an unobtainable object also fall under the realm of possessiveness? Is a man's possessiveness to be gauged only by what he has already acquired or should we include all the objects of luxury in this world, which he might someday possess?

This question has been answered in Jainism and also in other schools of thought in a similar vein. Not just acquired objects, but even the desire for objects that are not in one's possession is considered as possessiveness. Thus objects possessed by a person as well as the desire for unacquired objects fall under the realm of possessiveness.

You may wonder how this is so. It is logical to categorize acquired objects under man's possessiveness. There is no contradiction in this. But how can the objects, which are not in possession fall under the realm of one's possessiveness? If the yearning for an unacquired object is considered possessiveness, is there any point in renouncing acquired objects?

I have reiterated time and again that Jainism is a religion that stresses on willingness. An aspirant is free to adopt the vows as much as he wishes, as much as his mind wills him to do. Lord Mahāvīra said:

Oh favourite of the Gods! Do not delay in accomplishing that which brings you joy.[1]

If your mind is ready to spread its wings in flight and the time is ripe, then there must be no cause for delay. If you procrastinate, then it is possible that you might face a setback and change your mind. Therefore when inspired to perform a good deed, it is better to do it right away This is the ideal.

Let us take the example of Ānanda. Although he had enormous wealth, Lord Mahāvīra did not ask him to relinquish any of it. The great seer knew that religious sentiment stems simply from willingness and not from coercion.

1 ahā suham devānuppiyā, mā paḍibandhan kareha

I find that coercion is not necessary in religion. The levels of penance and the quantum of charity performed by an individual must be guided by his own will. And he will be blessed with such spiritual powers, as he is ready for. If you have the inner strength, you may be able to transform his mind and help him grow, but you can do this only by motivating him, not by coercion. Coercion is violence.

In recent times coercion has become a part of religion, thereby causing a loss of faith in the hearts of people. Because of this, man has started perceiving religion as a burden. It has lost its glow and is no more a pillar of strength and comfort.

When religion is followed because of external pressure rather than an inner calling, it will not bring any light or joy. This is why all religions, traditions and cults prevalent today have lost their lustre. The suspicion with which they are scrutinized is due to coercive methods used by them. Religion cannot reside in unwillingness.

Lord Mahāvīra did not put any pressure on Ānanda to reduce his possessions. Ānanda only relinquished what was not his by curbing his greed for them. The question before us now is - how can those objects which are not in one's possession be relinquished? And if such a possibility exists, then will such an act qualify as a worthy sacrifice? Ānanda's actions are quoted as an example of such a sacrifice. And more importantly, it was none other than Lord Mahāvīra himself who affirmed Ānanda's vow as a mighty one and listed him among the ten main *śrāvakas*. This confirms that his was not a sacrifice to be brushed aside as a mere whim nor an act of ego or deceit. Therefore we must reconsider and reframe our definition and understanding of possessiveness.

Is possessiveness the object or the desire for the object? The scriptures proclaim:

A limit must be set on desires. [2]

Here the limit is not on objects, but on the desire of objects.

2 icchāparimānam karei -- Upāsakadaśāṅga Sūtra

First and foremost desire rises in the mind of man. This is followed by a resolve to acquire that which is desired. This is the sequence of possessiveness. If there is no desire, then there is no endeavour to acquire possessions. If there is desire, then all objects, acquired or unacquired, come under the purview of possessiveness.

For one whose life is dictated by desire, every act committed is one of possessiveness. On the other hand, he who is free of attachments and desires, will never be considered possessive even if he rules the entire world! Wherever desire exists, possessiveness exists.

Therefore, although Ānanda has not relinquished a single object from his possessions, he has nevertheless taken the vow of non-possessiveness as a *śrāvaka*. And this means that he has given up desire and attachment. Verily, desire is attachment.[3]

During one of my discourses, a pertinent question was raised. A monk owns books to acquire knowledge, clothing to cover himself and utensils in which he accepts alms. He further admits disciples as part of his spiritual family. Among these, some are necessary for human existence and some for religious growth. The question posed to me was - if such possessions are permitted, then should not a monk also be considered possessive? In response, I again ask you the same question - is it the object or the desire for the object that gives rise to possessiveness? All religious and philosophical systems tell us that the monk who has a few material objects in his life cannot be considered possessive. This, of course, applies only to those monks who are true to their religious values, and not those who merely call themselves monks.

To reiterate my point, let me say this: If you have a son, it is possessiveness, but if the monk has a disciple, it is not possessiveness. Lord Mahāvīra had a family of 14,000 male and 36,000 female disciples, but that large family was not considered possessiveness. Yet, a man having just two sons is considered

3 mūrchā-channa-dhiyāṁ sarvaṁ, jagadeva parigrahah mūrcchayā rahitānāṁ tu, jagadevāparigrahaḥ

possessive. If you maintain a family name, then you are considered possessive as against the monk who has renounced his personal family to become part of a larger religious group. It is definitely a point to ponder upon.

So, it is noteworthy that it is not the object but the desire for the object that determines possessiveness. One may not yet have acquired a certain object, but if he is yearning for the object and constantly thinking of ways and means to acquire it, then he is caught in the web of possessiveness. He may have renounced the world, but if desire has not left his heart, he cannot be considered non-possessive, even if his external appearance may be that of a monk.

Once during our wanderings, we arrived at a village which had no followers of our religious sect. Therefore, finding someone to host our stay was impossible. With great difficulty, we came upon the ruins of an old Shiva temple which was already inhabited by four other travellers.

Two out of these four travellers were companions and had been travelling together. They were not present when we reached there. A short while after we had settled down, when one of them returned, he discovered that he and his companion had been robbed of their belongings. He became extremely agitated and started cursing the villagers.

When his friend returned, he sobbed uncontrollably and said, "Look at the misfortune this village has brought us. Some sinner has stolen all our belongings! Oh what will happen now?"

His friend remembered a man sitting in a corner of the temple and felt quite certain that the theft was committed by him. But he also realized that they would never be able to trace him as he was a wanderer too. He gently turned to his agitated friend and consoled him saying, "It is alright my dear friend. He has taken our belongings, but not our destiny."

When I heard this conversation, I fell into deep thought. What struck me was the extremely opposite reactions of the two

individuals who had suffered the same loss. One was so attached to his possessions and the other so completely detached.

At another time during our sojourn at Mahendragadh, we came in contact with a renowned Vedāntist from that village. Although he was not in the habit of visiting monks, over time he began to enjoy discussing Jaina and Vedānta philosophies with us. This Vedāntist who also happened to be the village headman, had just one son. Once when his son fell very ill, he took him to big cities like Bombay and Calcutta and spared no expense in the hope of finding a cure for his son The villagers asked, "Is this what is taught in the Vedānta?" I replied as gently as I could, "As long as one is in this world, responsibilities have to be fulfilled. How can a father be expected to allow his son to simply die? This is the way of the world."

Well, as fate had it, the boy did not survive his illness. On hearing the news of his demise the villagers thronged before the headman to offer their condolences. They cried saying, "Oh *Panditji*! What a tragedy! You had just one son and how unfairly fate has snatched him away from you!" And do you know what the wise one's reaction to their wailing was? With utmost dignity and tranquility he said to them, "What can anyone do my brothers? As long as God willed my son to be a part of my life, he remained in that relationship. Now it was time for him to move on and so he has left. Therefore, dear people, I urge you not to cry for me For what else can man do but try his best and leave the rest to the Almighty?"

And, people were astounded to see that not a tear fell from his eyes. This is detachment of the highest order.

First and foremost, and most difficult of all, is arriving at a feeling of detachment to one's possessions As attachment diminishes, so also does possessiveness. Detachment to one's possessions is an art to be mastered. Such an art has no pre-requisite of philosophical knowledge or religious rituals. It only requires willingness to modify one's mindset and lifestyle. One who has mastered this art will have a firm grip on his emotions even in the most trying of situations. Birth and death, gain and

loss, ups and downs, none of these will tear him apart. He will always remain detached. Neither can sorrow break such a man nor happiness overwhelm him.

A well known aquaintance of mine, Ratanlalji of Agra had to face a terrible tragedy. One day his son went for a swim in the Yamuna. Despite being a good swimmer he was unable to battle the strong currents and began to drown in the river. Somehow he was rescued and brought home, but his pulse was extremely feeble. Despite the best of medical care, he could not be saved. Ratanlalji was neither very old then nor a great philosopher. But when people went to pay their homage, they returned astounded. They had never seen a person who did not shed a tear on the demise of a son for whose future he had so many grand plans! He told them with equanimity, "All who take birth in this world have to pass away from it too. In this life, we meet only to part. One of us had to depart first and my son was the chosen one. After all, these matters are not in our hands!"

We are mortal beings, made up of the elements, belonging to the earth, dependent on our steadily ticking heartbeats. So, what sense does it make to feel attachment to the material objects of this world when our very lives are so fragile that they can be snuffed out without a moment's notice? What are these desires that we nurture for objects that are so transient? He who will smile at their arrival will weep at their departure. Therefore, he who does not welcome them eagerly nor let go of them sorrowfully is the one who has truly mastered the art of living. Such a person has no attachment and no greed. Impartiality is his armour; he is unaffected by any circumstance.

On the other hand, he who is controlled by desire and attachment can never find peace and straightforwardness. Such a person is consumed by petty misgivings. Moreover, he becomes bereft of any discrimination in matters of justice and injustice. Without any hesitation, he will use unlawful means to suit his end.

Listen to this incident from days gone by. A prince embraced monkhood and renounced all his luxuries and powers. When

his subjects praised him for his great sacrifice, he simply said, "Brothers, why are you praising me so much? What have I relinquished? Nothing at all!"

His subjects remarked, "In a world where people hold on to every penny that they own, you have given up all. You are indeed noble-hearted that inspite of sacrificing all your material comforts you say you have relinquished nothing!"

Do you know what the young prince replied? He said, "There is no greatness in this. It is merely a matter of realization. One man has a small packet of poison and another has a sack full of poison. Both of them do not know that what they possess is poison and therefore they guard and protect it. But the day they realize that it is poison, will they delay in throwing it away? Now, if people say that the person with the sack has done a great sacrifice, is that true? I have also done the same thing. What I have given up is poison, and I have given it up for immortality. Therefore, what is so noble or great about what I have done?"

On reflection, this simple truth is obvious. But those who are proud of their sacrifices do not wait to reflect. Instead they pass judgment based on material quantities. A man who has amassed great wealth is praised endlessly when he gives up a portion of it. But the poor man who relinquishes his meagre possessions goes unnoticed. Think about this. Do you not agree with me that the loss of one drop of blood is more significant for an ant than the loss of hundred drops of blood for an elephant?

We must reflect on this principle, for herein lies the truth of life which we must abide by. By passing judgment based on quantum of possessions, we are in fact aiding and abetting gross falsehood as a way of life. This is no way to find solutions.

Once Lord Buddha visited the town of Vaiśālī. The people of the town thronged him for his blessings and in keeping with the tradition of those times, they offered him platters of pearls, diamonds and other riches. If one placed one's palm over a gift, it was considered a sign of acceptance.

When Buddha placed his palm over all the treasure, the

people were happy indeed. Shortly, an old woman came by. She was the wife of a poor gardener. With much difficulty, she had saved half a pomegranate. When she placed it before Buddha as a gift, he immediately placed both his palms over it.

Can you imagine the shock of the rich people present there? Feeling proud over the gifts they had just given, they asked each other, "What is this? Our sacrifice of so much wealth was accepted with one palm where as this old woman's bit of pomegranate is greeted with both palms?"

Finally one of them asked Buddha, "Lord! Why have you given so much importance to this old woman's meagre gift?" The Buddha said with a smile, "After giving up as much as you have done, you would still have a lot left to enjoy. But this old woman has given away all she had in that bit of fruit! Her sacrifice is greater than the relinquishing of an entire nation. Therefore, I placed both my palms on it."

And therefore I reiterate, it is not the object, which is important, it is the feeling and intention behind it, which is important. The basis of possessiveness is desire and not the object. An object has no value in itself.

It is common knowledge that all religions and cults of the world permit their monks to possess a few basic worldly objects. It is possible that some keep less and some a bit more. But no one can operate in the complete absence of these basic essentials. In the mind of the monk, these objects are treated with detachment. And this is the key. Absence of attachment is non-possessiveness. In fact,' not just detachment towards objects, but even detachment towards disciples is necessary in this framework.

Once during his wanderings, Gaṇadhara Sudharmā Svāmī met an old woodcutter. All his hair had turned grey and his frail body barely seemed able to lift the bundle of wood on his head as he panted with its weight. Sudharmā Svāmī was touched by his piteous state. With compassion, he asked, "Sir, may I ask you who you live with? How large is your family?" And thus the conversation began.

"I am alone, there is nobody else in my life", the old man replied. "What is your livelihood?" asked the Svāmī. "I chop wood and sell it to earn my living", he answered.

"Do you have a house to stay in?"

The old man smiled sadly, "It could be called a house! It is nothing but a dilapidated shelter. Everytime it rains, the house is ruined and I set it right each time with some grass. This is my life and this is my work." So saying, the old woodcutter heaved a heavy sigh.

Sudharmā Svāmī asked him, "Brother, will you live your entire life like this without earning any merit for your life after this one? You need some good deeds in your bag for your next life. Otherwise your condition there will be piteous indeed!"

To this he responded, "My entire life has been spent in providing food for myself. If I know no better, how can I do anything for my afterlife? Who will pave the path and provide shelter for a poor old man like me?"

Listening to the pathetic story of the old man, Sudharmā Svāmī was deeply moved. He said, "Oh good man! If you wish, the *saṅgha* (congregation) will give you shelter. You can become a monk and thereby perform deeds that will keep you in good stead for your afterlife." This was like a divine boon for the old man With great happiness, he set off along with Sudharmā Svāmī as his disciple.

The question before us is whether this act of compassion by Sudharmā Svāmī is to be considered as possessiveness or greed to obtain one more disciple? No, his intention was not to obtain a disciple who would serve him and attend to his needs. Compassion for the old man was his impulse. His sole aim was to help the man to improve the quality of his life by offering him shelter and brotherhood in the congregation.

Once, Lord Mahāvīra was asked a question, "Can having a disciple be considered as possessiveness or not?"

He replied, "The answer lies in the intention rather than in

the object, which in this case is the disciple. If a monk admits a disciple in the hope that the disciple will take care of his needs, will get him alms, will serve him well, then the presence of that disciple is a result of the monk's possessiveness. But if the intention in admitting a disciple is to enrich the disciple's life and ensure the smooth functioning of the congregation and other religious matters related to it, then the presence of such a disciple is not born from possessiveness."

Good and evil have always co-existed like two sides of a coin from time immemorial. Whether it is the Golden age (*satayuga*) or the Corrupt age (*kaliyuga*), in every era, good and evil, both find their roots. Rāma and Rāvaṇa both were born in the same era. If it was the period of Rāma, it was also the period of Rāvaṇa The period of Kṛṣnā was the period of Kaṁsa. The period of Dharmarāja was also the period of Duryodhana.

If one thinks about the injustices and tortures that have been committed in the past eras, one wonders why only the present era is called the corrupt age. In the Court of Duryodhana, before the noble leaders of the country and before Dharmarāja himself, an attempt was made to undress a royal lady as respectable as Draupadī. All these eras are but imaginary boundaries of time created by man for practical purposes. In reality, our very own life is a blend of the golden age and the corrupt age. If truth exists in our life, the golden age is prevalent even today; and if evil exists, it is the corrupt age To justify our wrong actions, we may blame it on the era, but no man can escape the nemesis of his own deeds. Just because it is the corrupt age, will you be forgiven your wrong doings? It is not as if a different sun and moon existed in the golden age and a different one in this corrupt age. The sun and the moon are the same, and so is the wind. The laws of nature are the same. Mankind is the same.

Often it is seen that a person who falls prey to a bad habit, justifies it by saying, "This habit exists in others as well!" He may think that in doing so, he can escape the repercussions of it, but a negative act will always yield negative results. We are always tolerant of our weaknesses and use others as a justification for

our actions, but if a bad habit exists in many, it still remains bad, does it not?

We all have double standards. But we must be watchful of that. If you cannot tolerate a particular trait in your neighbour, don't tolerate it in yourself as well. It is not criticism of others, but self-criticism that will benefit you in the long run. When you see your neighbour who, despite being wealthy, is caught in the web of desire, you begin to emulate him. Desire becomes your mistress too and you get trapped in the web of accumulation. You justify your desire by comparing it to his. But this is not the ideal of life. It is not in imitating others, but in reflecting on your own actions that spiritual heights can be attained.

The maze of desires is so complex that one can never get out of it unless one adopts the path of non-possessiveness. If you understand that there is no peace to be found in this maze, that not just one lifetime but an endless cycle of rebirths cannot fulfil all your desires, then you will have no need to emulate those ignorant souls who, like moths to a flame, are attracted to the objects of their desires. Therefore, always follow the path of introspection rather than that paved by others. Do not imitate blindly, but be watchful of your own self. For that will be the true enlightened path that others will want to emulate as well.

Peer pressure is the main cause of greed and possessiveness in today's world. Each person is striving to be wealthier than the other. It is this desire that has made the universe a playground for conflicts. It has spread its ugly tentacles of unrest not just amongst individuals, but into entire nations. And the consequences stand clearly before us. There is no peace or joy at any level.

Of course, there are those who say that contentment is the escape route for impotent persons. They claim that contentment makes man dull, lazy and inactive, thereby creating an obstacle to life's progress.

But all I say is that the supporters of materialism are unaware of the art of living. They have not recognized the true

essence of life. Obsessed with material gain and progress, they have ignored the importance of peace and contentment in life.

Permit me to explain my view. With the passage of infinite years in time, man's struggles will only weigh him down further. As competitiveness and peer pressure increase, levels of stress are only bound to be heightened. So, where contentment has no place, how can rest abide? To run and to continue running will become one's destiny and man will not find even a moment's respite to assess what the results of his actions are?

To think of contentment as the quality of cowards is a mark of extreme ignorance. To draw a line of control across one's desires is never easy because, for that, one has to control one's innermost self. To control the inner self is no child's play. It is not a task that cowards can undertake. It requires great courage. The religious scholars have stated:

A person can conquer any number of warriors in a battlefield, but a true warrior is he who can conquer the inner self. It is the greatest of victories, a victory true in spirit.[4]

What better example than the mighty Rāvaṇa. Many great warriors in this world have admitted that he was an extraordinary warrior of his time. But even he could not control his inner being, nor his desires. As a result of this weakness he had to face death. He led his family and nation to great shame and destroyed himself because of his discontentment.

Rāvaṇa's story is pre-historic; leave it aside for the time being. Look at the life of Hitler, a great warrior of modern times. Hitler and his nation had no real need to establish their sovereignity over the whole of Europe. Still he led a campaign for victory and won over many smaller nations. But as he acquired more and more, his greed kept increasing.[5] Finally his discontentment led him to Russia which turned out to be his last journey. A journey of absolute failure and loss.

---

4 jo sahassam-sahassāṇaṁ, saṁgāme dujjae jiṇe egaṁ jiṇejja appāṇaṁ, esa se paramo jao -- Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 9. 34

5 jahā lāho tahā loho

If a person as powerful as Hitler could not exercise control over his desires, can you imagine how difficult this conquest is? Therefore, is it justified to classify contentment as a mark of cowardice? On the contrary, it is a distinguishing mark of the true warrior. It is the quality that makes life worthwhile at a personal as well as a universal level.

Contentment emerges when a person wants to conquer his desires and the first step in this journey is to move with confidence towards limiting one's desires. If you wish to lead a life of contentment, if you wish to live peacefully, then there is only one path - the path of limiting desires (*icchā parimāṇa*). Those who have tread upon this path have made their own lives glorious as well as the lives of others in their vicinity. This is the path of Lord Mahāvīra. This is the path of renunciation. This is the path of *sādhanā*.

Life of an Aspirant

LIFE OF AN ASPIRANT

The values of sacrifice, renunciation and *sādhanā* which are dependent on external factors have to be redirected towards the inner self . When external sight transforms into an internal insight, the path of liberation will be lit up for the soul to move on.

Many of us enjoy attending religious discourses. But more often than not, we only hear what is being said. We do not listen and imbibe the wisdom of the words. Therefore, although some of us are motivated after listening to discourses, when it comes to real life situations, our decisions are far removed from the lessons.

We often hear that this life is a golden opportunity to be utilized well. If not utilized, there is much to regret later. He who has lost this life has lost much. An Ācārya once said:

Any destruction in this life is massive destruction.[1]

If you stumble here, you will stumble everywhere. And if in this life you find the road to joy and peace, then rest assured, your difficulties will have found their shore for ever.

If the locusts of desire are not steered away from the garden

1 ıto vınaṣṭiḥ mahato vinaṣṭih

of the mind, the plant of joy will not grow. As long as there is life, there are bound to be temptations and therefore an everflowing sea of desire. The question is - which of these desires are worthy of attention and which are the ones to be ignored?

At the outset, one has to reflect upon the issue of desires. What are the desires that are essential for a balanced life? And which are those desires that cause turmoil and burden in one's life? For the fulfilment of those desires, which are essential, one has to make the right effort to clean out the grime and burden of unnecessary desires. Everyday, innumerable desires are born in the mind, and innumerable desires are thwarted. The mind is like a field, where along with essential grains, many wild weeds also sprout up. When the farmer sows the seeds, his only aim is to grow his crops. But along with grains, many kinds of grass find root, which are not just unnecessary, but harmful as well. If they are not weeded out well, they will grow like a wild forest in that field. As a result, the seeds which have been sown will not receive adequate nourishment. Any crop that grows well is meant for the betterment of the farmer as well as the nation at large. Man's mind is also like the field where seeds of resolve are sown. If we are careless, the weeds of negative thoughts infringe our minds. As a result, the more pristine desires which may have been spiritual, familial, or patriotic will not get adequately nurtured. The mind will be tempted to nurture the unhealthy desires. Therefore, it is essential that an intelligent person must create an inner strength to discriminate between his needs and desires. Herein lies the importance of introspection.

There are two types of reactions to this phenomenon called desire. Some people nurture their desires, and feel successful with the fulfilment of each desire. But there are some who aspire to vanquish desires even before they surface. They believe in relinquishing material possessions and try to conquer the desires that take birth in their minds. They do not gloat with pride when their desires are fulfilled, nor do they suffer in deprivation. The first category of people enjoy worldly success in the fulfilment of desires whereas the second category of people experience spiritual ecstasy on conquering their desires.

A mind that is free of desires is calm and serene but a mind that is disturbed by desires is insatiable. The more you try to satisfy it, the more you get ensnared in its web. If life was like a smooth highway, one could speed through it without any stops or pitfalls. But, alas! Such is not the case. Life is full of difficulties and obstacles. And how do we face these obstacles? By always being hurt by them, and allowing the thorns of unrest, hatred and jealousy to pierce our very flesh! There is calmness and serenity before desires are born, but when obstacles arise in the path of desires, then the mind gets agitated, and as a result, negative emotions like anger and pride arise.

All of man's desires can never be fulfilled; this is a universal law. In life, unfulfilled desires are always greater in number. On one hand, man's heart and mind are constantly troubled because these desires are not fulfilled, and on the other hand, his mind burns with frustration against those circumstances and powers that create obstacles in the fulfilment of desires. Often, a person begins to hate himself to the extent of committing suicide.

There is not a single person whose every desire has been fulfilled, nor is it likely to ever happen. One who makes such a tall claim is obviously suffering from delusion or self-deception.

This is similar to the case of a man who first inflicts a wound upon himself with a knife and then bandaging himself, feels happy when the wound has healed. This is only an indication of his foolishness. After all, joy can exist only in the state prior to the wound, then why inflict the wound at all? So also the state prior to the arising of desire is the state of peace, contentment and joy. In fact, any experience of contentment stems from an absence of desire. To create desires is to inflict a wound upon oneself with a knife. The wound on the body may heal in time, but the wound inflicted by the knife of desire does not ever heal. And a wounded mind has no space to rest. It is always restless, always searching. Day and night the mind is troubled by worries and burdened by obstacles. And at the end of the day, even if the wound starts healing, of what use is it? The peace that existed before the emerging of desires is anyway lost

forever. In its place lies the conflict arising from desire, which is akin to the self-inflicted wound. This is just like *prāṇāyāma* done in reverse. In fact, the entire analysis can be simply summed up by the argument that if there is joy in the absence of desire, then why entertain desire at all?

Religious scholars have said that an in-depth analysis of our emotions and desires will reveal that meaningless and petty emotions trouble the mind all the time. Even if we wish to fulfil desires so that there may be peace, only a few can be fulfilled; most desires can never be fulfilled. It is often the case that in the fulfilment of one desire, many new ones emerge. This life is like a palace that has a thousand doors, all of them locked. If a person tries to open the first door, he will find the second one locked. After a lot of effort, he will open the second just to find the third one locked. In this manner, his entire life is spent on opening one door after another. Until finally, in the maze of unlocked doors, the door of death opens before him and he has no choice but to enter it leaving all unopened doors behind.

When Rāvaṇa was lying on his death-bed in preparation for the final departure, he was asked if he had a final wish. He said sadly, "Some desires, some wishes of my life remain unfulfilled, unable to fly, like a broken-winged bird Now they have to remain within me, tortured. They cannot be fulfilled."

When he was asked what these wishes were, he said:

"It was my desire that fire should burn, but not emit smoke and blackness. It should emit only brightness and light. That gold, which is so beautiful to the sight, should have a lovely fragrance as well. That the salty seas on all the shores of Lanka should have sweet water, so that it can be useful to all.

"There are many more desires, but these three desires are my most cherished ones. I have established my sovereignty from one end of the world to the other. I have created the Lanka of gold and acquired magical powers. And yet, here I lie, waiting for death to free me of the pain caused by my most cherished, unfulfilled desires."

When one as mighty and powerful as Rāvaṇa accepts defeat at the hands of unfulfilled desires, then what can be said of ordinary mortals? From time immemorial, desires have emerged, have been extinguished and have re-emerged with greater passion. Even on becoming king of the heavens, Indra's desires have not been satiated. Such is the appetite of desires.

A wealthy man once said, "I aspire to spend time in religious activities. I yearn to attend discourses, but I have to work so hard to manage my basic necessities that I find no time." It is this appetite of the mind which cannot be satisfied even with the wealth of a thousand emperors and that of Lord Indra combined. A handful of grain is all our stomach needs, but the appetite of the mind is so large that you can go on filling it, yet it remains unfulfilled. If fat is poured on blazing flames, will they ever subside? On the contrary, they will be further kindled. The same is the case of pacifying desires by trying to fulfil them. It is said in the *Manusmṛti* that trying to fulfil desires is like adding fat to fire.[2]

Where is joy? Sometimes I wonder, after all where does it reside? As long as desires exist, whether you fulfil them or whether you allow them to remain in your mind, they will only frustrate you. As long as you try to satiate desires, the moment of total fulfilment cannot arrive, and without that, how can everlasting joy be found?

A monarch who rules over six regions still thirsts for a seventh one! Just think - if the opulence of six regions cannot give contentment, then what is there in the seventh one which would satisfy him? Lord Mahāvīra has said:

For avarice is boundless like the sky.[3]

The scriptures say that the hope to be able to fulfil all desires is like the woman whose countless children have lived and died, but her life has not reached its end. That moment when you will reach the end of your hopes and desires will be the moment

2 na jātu kāmah kāmānāmupabhogena śāmyati havıṣā kruṣna-vatrmeva bhūya evābhıvardhate

3 icchā hu āgāsasamā aṇamtıyā

when you will discover the spring of joy and peace in your soul. Material satisfaction is transient, the joy of the soul is eternal.

This is the crucial issue regarding *sādhanā* - how is one to stop this flow of impulses? As we reflect on *sādhanā*, a question looms before us - an old and deep question. As we dwell deeper into finding an answer, the question becomes more profound.

A person floating on the surface of water has no idea about its depth. So also, when we ponder over a problem, we may be just skimming at the superficial level. By believing that we are thinking deeply about the problem, we may be deluding ourselves. Constant and patient reflection is an art to be learnt.

We are concerned now with the mind of the seeker. All actions, whether mental, physical or verbal, create subtle impressions in the mind. Thus the mind has impulses and values, some of which have been companions of the soul for many lives. The soul also gathers fresh impressions all the time. However, let me explain to you that impulses are not eternal. It is their impressions in the mind which have an endless flow. For example, anger is an impulse which has a beginning; so also greed and pride. But the stream from where they all emerge is eternal. To explain this simply, the stream of impulses has no beginning, no end. It flows eternally. It has been and will always be. From this stream, impulses like anger and jealousy surface in the mind at different times and in different forms.

As a seeker progresses on the path of *sādhanā*, he reaches a state of conflict within himself, a crossroad where he has to make a choice. It is here that the two roads of *sādhanā* are born. Some choose the path of suppressing impulses, known as *upaśama*, while others choose the path of slow lulling of impulses, known as *kṣaya*.

Let us now think. What happens when we get angry? When we are criticized, we feel wronged and angry. As anger increases, memory begins to deteriorate and our body becomes weaker. Do you understand that this feeling of anger is not born from an inner discrimination? Rather, it is born out of external pressure,

influence and attachment. We wish to suppress our anger, to hide it so that others do not think of us as short-tempered; also because we do not want its negative consequences to affect our body. But just like fire is concealed in ashes, the heat of anger remains within us, masked in the veil of diplomacy.

You may recall - I recently stated in a discourse that if you want to see a person's true colour, see him in his home. Outside, a person wears many masks, he responds to social and societal pressures, he fears for his reputation. Therefore, a person's true colours are revealed only in the privacy of his home and not outside. At home, he is free of societal pressure and so is able to express himself freely. In man's life, there is a constant play of diplomacy. He presents different facets of himself at different times depending on what is required of him, thus rarely revealing his true self. In today's world, political diplomacy has invaded simple, mundane lives as well.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Vyāsa has stated the qualities of a king:

A king's words are soft like butter, but his heart is like a sharp-edged knife.[4]

That is, keeping his innermost thoughts hidden, maintaining an external calm, speaking sweet words of diplomacy, and weaving deadly plots to weaken an enemy's barriers - these are the distinguishing features of a king.

Thousands of years later, this political ethos continues. I agree that in the past, such tactics were part of political policies, but today they have become an integral part of even our family and personal life. What was earlier considered as a necessary evil to combat enemies has now been adopted and justified as a way of life. A Sanskrit verse says:

Three indicators of a wicked person are: Face radiant like lotus, speech soothing like sandal paste and heart sharp like scissors.[5]

---

4 vāṁ navanītaṁ, hrudayaṁ tīksna-dhāram -- Ādiparva 3/123

5 mukham padmadalākāram vāṇī candana-śītalā hrudayaṁ karttarī-tulyam, trividhaṁ dhūrta-lakṣaṇam

In the past, these complex facades of the body, mind and speech were characteristics of a cunning mind. So the verse says that if you look at the face of a cunning man; it looks like a blooming lotus. A radiant expression, a welcoming smile and a soothing voice. But look into his heart and what you will find is cunningness of such a high order that it spares no one, not even his best of friends. But in the present world, these have been mastered even by those who are known to be simple and sagacious.

Earlier, I spoke about those who mask their true selves in the presence of others. Such a suppression to create a façade before people is the cause of ultimate downfall. The *upaśama* of *sādhanā* is of a different nature altogether. By this, a seeker does not indulge in treachery, deceit or pretense any more, but his inner resolve is not yet strong enough to destroy the impulses. The fire of attachment and aversion that is within cannot be destroyed easily; it remains suppressed. But by the power of *sādhanā*, a momentary state of calmness or detachment is achieved - this is the *upaśama* of *sādhanā*. Therefore, at this stage impulses are merely suppressed. And at the first opportunity, these suppressed impulses rise to the surface.

In this regard, let me give you an example. Imagine your house is messy and has not been swept for many days. All of a sudden, you have visitors So what do you do? In a hurry, you throw a beautiful rug over the mess so that your guests do not think that you have a dirty house. Thus the mess has not been thrown out but merely hidden. This explanation can be broadly used to understand the *upaśama* of impulses.

Look at this second example. Imagine you have filled muddy water in a glass jar and set it aside for a while, without disturbing it. Shortly, the mud will settle at the bottom, the clear water at the top. But what kind of clarity is this? If the jar is shaken a little, the mud will again mix into the water and make it murky once more. When mud settles at the bottom, it is *upaśama*, but when it rises to the surface again, it is in the *audayika*[6] state.

6 Udaya means manifestation or rise When there is a manifestation or rise of karmas, the soul is said to be in audayika-bhava- just as dirtiness

Thus, supression of impulses leads to the state of *upaśama*, while their manifestation leads to the *audayika* state.

In the state of *upaśama*, the impulses of anger, pride and greed seem to be dormant and calm on the surface. But suppressed impulses cannot stay dormant for very long. The time-span of *upaśama* is said to be no more than *antarmuhūrtta*[7]. In every moment of our lives we experience the faltering of the mind. How unstable and fickle the mind is with its rise and ebb of emotions and thoughts! Don't all of us experience this every moment of our lives? Thus, we see that suppressed impulses are easy targets of temptation. At the first prospect, they rise to the surface again, and return to their *audayika* state.

In psychological terms, in the state of *upaśama*, the impulses that arise in the conscious mind retreat to the sub-conscious. There they remain hidden as *sanskāras*. In moments of confusion, they re-surface to the conscious level once again.

Just imagine - a thief breaks into your house, hides quietly in a corner and you are oblivious of him. How can your wealth remain safe? A moment of carelessness on your part and he vanishes with your valuables. How can we be safe from a thief who is within our home? In *upaśama*, the impulses stay hidden quietly like the thief, but for how long? After the *antarmuhūrtta* of forty-eight minutes, they become active once again.

Once a young lad was wandering on a cold, hilly terrain. At night, he came across a snake which lay unconscious in the cold. Assuming it to be dead, he picked it up fearlessly and put it in his pocket. He wanted to take it home to frighten his siblings. With this playful thought in his mind, he reached home, hands and feet frozen from the cold. He sat by the hearth to enjoy the warmth of the fire. As the warmth reached into his pocket, the snake slowly gained consciousness. Before he knew it, the boy was dead from the deadly bite of the snake.

The snake frozen from the cold outside gained consciousness

appears in water in which dirt has been mixed.

7 A period of up to forty-eight minutes.

from the heat. The invigilant boy who wanted to make fun of others, met his death.

Impulses like anger, pride, delusion and greed are like the snake which sometimes lies dormant due to the cooling and serene effect of *sādhanā*. But by believing that our impulses have been completely vanquished, or that anger and greed have been dissipated, we tend to become careless and invigilant. Because, in reality, these impulses have only been temporarily rendered inactive or unconscious, they have not lessened but have been suppressed. They can easily be activated with the slightest provocation Once they awaken, the aspirant-like-existence comes to an end.

The lad had made an error in calculation by assuming that the snake was dead, a mistake that cost him his life. Often, such errors are made by our aspirants in the sphere of *sādhanā*. As a consequence, people often judge them as proud and haughty, and shirk them away as fraudulant mendicants.

Recently, newspapers carried shocking reports on the gross negligence of renowned hospitals where doctors without careful examination, declared unconscious patients dead. Due to this callous error, those unfortunate people were made to lie along with dead bodies in the mortuary. When some of them regained consciousness, there was obviously an uproar against the negligence and insensitivity on the part of the doctors.

A similar kind of invigilance often derails the life of the negligent, unsuspecting aspirant He commits a grave error by taking for granted, even for a moment, that all his negative or physical impulses are dead. Therefore, when these impulses surface unexpectedly, his actions cause distress to those around him The person is also shocked at his own negative impulses. Constant introspection of the self is of extreme importance in order to keep our impulses in check.

Calmness in the face of fear is the sign of true renunciation. Succumbing to objects of fear is not true renunciation. Fear can direct even an animal to tread warily. Take the example of an

animal that is led to graze by its master in the field. However tempted the animal may feel to stop and chew the luscious grass, it moves straight on without daring to succumb. Why? Is this restraint? Has he become a *yogī*? No, this is not restraint, it is fear. The fear of the cowherd's cane keeps him steadfast on his path. An Ācārya has stated in Sanskrit:

He who has overcome his impulses is one, who in the face of rampant corruption, immense material and sensual temptation remains calm and unaffected.[8]

Even in an untoward situation, his worldly impulses remain dormant. Such detachment is possible only when one has earnestly and absolutely renounced from within. Such a renunciation is not an external garb. It is born not out of anger, greed or bitterness towards life, but from discrimination and vigilance It is a true awakening of the soul.

How can we initiate a spiritual revolution in today's world? Are changes in impulses and values necessary? Yes, they are. The thought process and vision prevalent in the present day *sādhanā* is not a healthy one, for it is directed by cowardice; it is false renunciation caught in the clutches of fear and shame. There is a need for change and revolution. A change in vision can change the universe.

Imagine you find your child indulging in an unhealthy habit like smoking. What would your first impulse or reaction be? Either you will resort to anger or you will say, "What are you doing? What will people say?"

The very statement - "what will people say" - stems from fear of others rather than concern for a loved one. Such logic cannot change nor squash his negative impulse. It can only suppress it and create the impulse of fear in him. By creating the fear of social disapproval in his mind you have encouraged him to follow his impulse, in this case to smoke, in hiding. Your intention may be to inspire him to think ethically, but your reason and logic fail to prepare an ethical grounding for him.

8 vikāra-hetau sati vikriyante yeṣām na cetānsi ta eva dhīrā

In the same manner, there are so many customs and traditions in social life which you do not believe in, which you keep condemning, but continue to live up to. Only for the same reason - what will people say?

You want to protect a child by instilling societal fear in him because you yourself pander to societal pressures. Thus, you are caught between two worlds. But I say - a change in thinking and reasoning is the need of the hour. Old values of societal fear must be replaced by new values of self realization. Our vision needs rectification.

I once chanced upon a monk who was admonishing his disciple by saying, "Brother! What are you doing? What will the *śrāvakas* say?"

I spoke to him saying, "Oh monk! I am happy that you stopped your disciple from wrong-doing, but your method was not right. This is not the way to impart wisdom to one's disciple. "What will the *śrāvakas* say?" - by this statement, you have created within him the need to hide his impulses. You should have said, "How will your soul feel?" If you have restrained someone by external pressure, it means that there has not been an awakening, nor has a path towards self-reflection been etched out." Until self-reflection is awakened, no man or woman will make an honest attempt to uproot negative impulses.

I often think about this and have stated on more occasions than one, that externally forced renunciation does not work. We speak of prohibition of smoking and consumption of alcohol. The ethos of this prohibition is correct, but it stems from a materialistic justification. Reasons such as bodily harm and wastage of money are worldly reasons and justifications for forced prohibitions. The strong pillars of renunciation cannot rest on such feeble foundations. We must learn to assess our lives based on what is good for the soul. Our inner vision has to awaken.

Is our renunciation true or is it a facade? The portrayal of religious conduct with regard to renunciation can often become

melodramatic and therefore absurd. This is most often due to a need to make an impression in one's society or community.

Once, on our return from Palanpur, many of us arrived at Sachore town in Rajasthan. It was an ancient region, and deeply influenced by another following. While one of our younger monks set out to receive alms for our meal, an elderly monk from our group advised him, "Today while receiving *gocharī*,[9] you must make an impression. Let the people of this town always remember us as highly evolved and self-realized monks."

In obedience, the younger monk went about receiving the *gocharī* with high-handedness. "Oh, this food is *asūjhatā*.[10] It does not look like it was prepared with vigilance", he fussed. People were astounded and exclaimed, "Oh monk! We have never seen such evolved saints earlier! Such an uncompromising attitude reflects your austerity and inner will."

Later the monk reported to the elder one saying, "Master, we have created such an impression that people have forgotten the previous saints."

I was surprised as well as amused and observed, "What is all this? Why did you not do the same today that you do everyday? Or why don't you do everyday what you did today? Why these double standards in behaviour?"

To this, they retorted, "After all, we don't have to live here everyday. We have come for a day and we will go away soon enough. At least, the people here will remember that some great saints who were perfectionists had visited here once."

The point that I am making here is that the need to impress is not just a disease of the common man. It has corrupted even the so-called enlightened ones.

When can one achieve a wholesome state? Even in the time

9 Food given as alms to ascetics

10 Food not prepared according to rules and regulations. Though Jainism forbids the cooking of food for ascetics since they should partake what is already available, the ascetics are bound by a lot of rules on the kind of food they should accept.

of Lord Mahāvīra, this conflict, this duality was prevalent. It was to end this conflict that he preached earnestly:

Whenever an aspirant observes any vow, performs any penance or act of sādhanā for his soul, he will be blessed with an inner vision and will therefore never be involved in deceit. For one who can see clearly within himself, there will remain no duality - asleep or awake, in solitude or in a crowd, he will only be his true, singular self[11]

Because, whatever he does, he does for his soul, rather than to create an impact on others. His actions and his speech are pure and devoid of dualities and discrepancies. Such is his ultimate ideal.

As he says, thus he acts.[12] As he is within, so he appears outside. As he appears outside, so he is within [13]

I believe that this is the purest picture of an aspirant's life, a true reflection. And such a condition can exist only when an aspirant's renunciation is illuminated with the light of his inner self - that light which will emanate from his depths and illumine his entire life.

You may ask now, "When will this light within be lit, and how can this true form of renunciation be achieved?" My answer to you is this: Your inner light will dawn from the moment when you see the difference between uprooting your negative impulses and simply suppressing them. When this discrimination illuminates your inner gaze, it will inspire you towards true renunciation rather than renunciation by external forces. When impulses are uprooted, liberation will naturally follow.

We use the word '*nirvāṇa*' to mean liberation The actual meaning of *nirvāṇa* is 'to be extinguished' - a burning lamp to be snuffed out. As an ācārya has stated in Sanskrit literature:

What is the use of pouring oil in a lamp which is at the point

11 sutte vā jāgaramāne vā, egao vā parisāgao vā
12 jahāvādī tahākārī
13 jahā anto tahā bāhim, jahā bāhiṁ tahā anto

of extinction?[14]

The renowned Buddhist scholar Ācārya Aśvaghoṣa has also used the word *nirvāṇa* in the same context.

A burning lamp is extinguished, its flame flickers away - can you tell me where that flame goes? Does it go down, or does it vanish into space above? Does it vanish in the easterly direction, or does it disappear into the west? It goes nowhere. When it runs out of oil, it is extinguished right there. It attains liberation.[15]

According to the Buddhist philosophy, the same understanding applies to the soul. They believe that the lamp of our soul burns with the oil of attachment and aversion. But at a point, when the oil is completely emptied, the lamp of consciousness is extinguished. As the flame dies out, the soul, ripe with wisdom attains liberation at the very spot. It needs to travel no further.

Jainism does not accept the Buddhist theory of the soul getting extinguished. It has an independent understanding about *nirvāṇa*. At this juncture, I wish to tell you that Jainism also accepts the primary meaning of *nirvāṇa* as blowing off, to be put off. Until the flame of attachment and aversion does not get extinguished, until the volcano of passions does not become dormant, liberation cannot happen. When the flame of desires is extinguished, the soul comes into its pure form and attains its primal state. This is *nirvāṇa*, this is liberation. *Nirvāṇa* is not the snuffing out of the soul, but rather the snuffing out of attachment and aversion.

I reiterate once again that if we have to move towards liberation, if we have to attain liberation, then we must learn to put out the fire of anger and desire. It is not just suppression of these emotions, but an uprooting and slow lulling of impulses. The flame of *sādhanā* should be bright and blazing, not feeble and weak.

14 nirvāna-dīpe kimu tailadānam

15 dīpo yathā nirvruttimabhyupeto, naivāvanim gacchati nāntarikṣam diśam na kāncid vidśam na kāncid, sneha-kṣayāt kevalameti śāntim

We must move towards eradicating external pressures and circumstances that exert an influence on our *sādhanā* nowadays. The values of sacrifice, renunciation and *sādhanā* which are dependent on external factors have to be redirected towards the inner self. When the external sight transforms into an internal insight, the path of liberation will be lit up for the soul to move on.

Conflict Resolution

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When desires are limited, needs also get limited; when needs get limited, then conflicts, tensions and contradictions in the journey of life also begin to reduce. Moving beyond conflicts leads to peace, happiness and joy.

The root of all adversities lies in unrestrained and unharnessed desires. Desires give rise to the tendency of possessiveness which in turn entangles man in the web of passions. He is now helpless, and all the wisdom and logic of life disappears into thin air. Therefore, the primary aim of an aspirant is to exercise control and conquer desires

The path prescribed for such an endeavour is the *icchā parimāṇa vrata* or the vow of limiting desires.

Great thinkers have compared the human mind to the sea. Just as innumerable waves rise and fall tirelessly, their rhythmic sound an affirmation of their ceaseless activity, so also thoughts and emotions splash against the shores of the mind making it a hub of activity. Currents of resolve and conflict clash endlessly here, creating gushing whirlpools of joy and sorrow.

Just as the sea is infinite, so also is the mind. There is no

end to its thought-processes, to its desires and wishes. Therefore the *Ācāryas* have compared it to an ocean to explain its all-importance.[1]

When we compare the mind to an ocean, the question rises - just as we can see the ocean and witness the strange phenomenon of rising waves joyfully playing on its chest, can we also see the mind and its ceaseless activities? Where is this mind? What is its form?

All these questions present themselves before us like mysteries which are difficult to fathom. For some understanding of these mysteries, let us look into the tendencies of the mind.

According to the school of Yogā, there is an eight-leaved lotus in the heart and this is where the mind resides. Science, however, does not accept the existence of this eight-leaved lotus. Others have likened the mind to an atom (*paramāṇu*), which resides in the heart.

The Jaina Ācāryas have stated that the mind is extremely subtle. It does not reside in any one bodily part, but is all-pervasive. Just as butter resides in every drop of milk, as fragrance resides in every petal of a flower, so also the mind pervades the entire body.

When a thorn pricks us, we instantly cry out in pain, our eyes start watering and our thoughts get numbed for that moment. If the mind were located in one particular place, then the entire system would not vibrate with such a response. When one part of the body experiences pleasure or pain, heat or cold, the body responds in its totality.

This power to experience feelings as a whole proves that the mind resides in the entire body. It is stated in the scriptures:

Where there is air, the mind is there too.[2]

But the question does not end here. What is the form of the mind? Is it inert matter or is it a conscious centre?

1 mano vai sarasvān
2 yatra pavanastatra manah

The Jaina studies have given a detailed analysis of the mind. The mind is considered to be gross as well as subtle. The former is known as the physical mind (*dravya mana*) and the latter as the psychical mind (*bhāva mana*). This is the two-fold classification of the mind in Jaina philosophy.

The power to experience and to feel pertains to the psychical mind. Without the psychical mind, the physical mind has no basis. All experiences and thoughts emerging from desires and wants, resolves and conflicts, find their substratum in the psychical mind. While describing the form of the mind, the scriptures say that the mind is like a swing oscillating between hopes and desires. And no single object is ever the cause of these endless desires.[3] The mind is in fact the birthplace of these wants, cravings and ambitions which take birth and fade away only to be replaced by newer wants.

The question is - will this cycle of desires and resolves that emerge in the mind keep on churning without a beginning or an end? Can the thought-waves of the mind be restrained by the barriers of detachment? Can the waves of strange and restless emotions ever reach a peaceful end? Is it possible to reach a state which is free of desires and resolves? The scriptures describe a state of complete cessation of desires, a state of absolute detachment, but they also state that attaining such a state cannot happen all at once. It is not possible to combat the mind so easily. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna says:

Oh Kṛṣṇā! The mind is fickle, turbulent and unyielding. To control it, I think, is as difficult as controlling the wind.[4]

Truly, to control the mind is as enormous a challenge as climbing the Himalayas. Before scaling the lofty Himalayas, it is essential to practice scaling smaller mountains to gain confidence and strength. Similarly, one can only reach the state of detachment after the mind has learnt to resolve conflicts by analysis and clear thought. Before forsaking desires completely,

3 saṅkalpa-vikalpātmakam manah

4 cancalaṁ hi manah kruṣna pramāthi valavaddruḍham tasyāha nigrahaṁ manye vāyoriva suduṣkarama

we have to set a limit on desires. Then we can move on to the higher goal of complete renunciation.

Icchā parimāṇa is the segregation of desires and the marking of their boundaries. What is essential for an aspirant is to acrue the wisdom to know the difference between those wants that are necessities and those that are whims of the restless mind. There are many such hopes and wants which are in reality quite useless, which neither have a direct bearing on life, nor any utility for existence. These wants and the hope to acquire them are as tempting as the elusive golden deer of the *Rāmāyana*.

Primarily, we have to take stock of our desires. Once we have prioritized them, we have to forsake the ones that are unnecessary. This relinquishing of the unnecessary is described as the vow of *icchā parimāṇa* in the Jaina tradition. It clearly states that there are infinite desires in the mind which have to be limited, which have to be controlled. Desires are like an unbridled horse, like an elephant out of control. When you harness desires, they will remain within a well-defined periphery. It is desire that gives rise to possessiveness. Verily, desire is possessiveness. When desires get limited, possessions will get limited.

Jainism does not believe that objects are the cause for possessiveness In the true sense, the desire to possess them is possessiveness. Lord Mahāvīra calls this as '*mucchā pariggaho*' - attachment is possessiveness. A similar vein can be seen in Ācārya Umāsvāti's Sanskrit verse - '*mūrcchā parigrahaḥ*'. *Mūrcchā* means attachment, where 'I' and 'mine' dominate. The tendency to connect an object with the mind, and induce the feeling of 'mine' in it is possessiveness. The Jaina philosophy describes desire as *avirati* (attachment), while *virati* means disinterest and detachment.

Attachment resides within the tumultous gushing sea of desires. The Ācāryas have explained attachment through a comparison made between a worm and an emperor.

The worm spends its life crawling in filth and darkness. On the other hand, an emperor rules over vast kingdoms and

spends his life in the expansion of his territory. Ponder a while and answer this - which among the two is more possessive?

You might wonder at such a strange comparison. After all, what does the worm possess? Neither material objects nor a large body, not even longevity! To compare it with the enormous kingdom and wealth of an emperor seems ridiculous, does it not?

But herein lies the impartiality of Jainism. It places both of them on the same platform. If you reflect, you will understand that both are equals as far as their tendency of attachment goes. The wisdom to set a limit on one's desire is not exercized by either of them. Let me explain this further.

Does a worm have the power to think? If it cannot think, how can it have desires? I am sure these are the questions in your mind. It is true that a worm has neither mind nor imagination. But what if it did? If it could think like a human being, if it had imagination and if you then asked it what it desires, what do you think its answer would be? Let me assure you that its desires would be no less than a king's desires. But in its present form, it does not possess the adequate mental faculties to so desire. Therefore, its desires are dormant and inactive.

Would you call this sacrifice? Would you consider this as a victory over desires? It is obvious that this is not an expression of inner strength but a lack of power. Powerlessness to obtain or utilize something cannot be considered as sacrifice or abstinence. It is a state of dependence and helplessness.

Non-usage or non-possession of objects cannot be considered as sacrifice unless it is voluntary. How can helplessness be mistaken for abstinence?

Imagine that a person is sick, he has ulcers in his stomach and is suffering from indigestion. He cannot digest fatty foods like sweets, milk or dry fruits. The doctor has warned him that if he eats any of these things, his ailments will only increase and it would be all the more difficult to take care of his health. Therefore, he eats only simple food.

Tell me, would you call him a renouncer? Would it not be obvious to you that this is no sacrifice? If he has given up eating certain foods it is only because he is helpless due to his ill-health. Since he cannot digest certain foods, he cannot eat them. This is restraint born from fear of suffering. It is not renunciation. At the moment, he is helpless. Circumstances have forced him to give up whatever he desires. His desire to eat has not abated, but the desire for good health has made him give up rich food temporarily. He is not joyous about giving up rich food, in fact, it fills him with sorrow and craving.

Let us consider another example. A businessman goes abroad to earn money. He leaves behind his family, the love and affection of his wife, children, parents and relatives. In the new place far from home, he faces many problems. He finds almost no time to eat or drink, nor does he get proper accommodation. In this manner, he encounters innumerable difficulties, similar to those a monk would face or may be more.

So what is this? Is this penance? Is it a step towards spiritual development? Unfortunately it is nothing as lofty. All these difficulties are borne with the aim of achieving a reward of pleasure. Sacrificing something for material pleasure cannot be called renunciation.

Once, after spending the *caturmāsa* in Calcutta, we went to Orissa. After crossing a vast mountain range, we reached a small village at the base of the mountain. It was an area of dense forest inhabited by tribals far removed from civilization, who hunted their prey with bows and arrows.

Amidst such a scenario, we managed to unearth the address of a Rajasthani brother and found our way to his home. He was delighted to see us and welcomed us with much warmth. He said, "*Mahārāj*, how fortunate I am that you have come to my humble dwelling!" He gave us a place to stay and was very respectful and hospitable.

As conversation began, we asked him, "How is it that you have chosen to reside in such a strange place amidst forests and jungle folk?" We were truly perplexed.

He was from Alwar, Rajasthan. He said, "How does a place matter? What one needs is money. If I can earn in hell, I will start a shop there too." All of us burst into laughter at his answer - it was a strange reply. He continued, "*Mahārāj*, the living conditions are pathetic here. But I have to earn my livelihood. It is to fill this stomach that I am staying away from home. Transport facilities are not good here, tribal colonies are so close that anything can happen any time. Life is quite unpredictable. Nevertheless, I earn well here. So I decided to live amidst these insecurities, with my life in my fist, so to speak."

What a strange state of life! How many sacrifices man is willing to make for the sake of wealth! However, this sacrifice is not for renunciation, but for the reward of enjoyment. The platform of renunciation and sacrifice for a higher cause is not yet achieved.

Are you now beginning to comprehend why the platform of renunciation is such a high and lofty one and why the control of desires is considered such a profound thought? The message is clear. We must learn to overcome desires rather than be enslaved by them.

As long as desires are unrestrained, the state of the emperor and that of the worm are one and the same. Therefore, Lord Mahāvīra says that if you relinquish any object dear to you without expecting rewards for it, only then is your sacrifice a true one.

When one has the will and the power to acquire whatever one desires and yet exercises control over these desires, then such a person is considered a true renouncer. Otherwise, as an ancient proverb states: Helplessness creates many saints. Their sacrifices have no worth. Renunciation exists in the control of desires.

The primary question before us is the control of desires. Imagine that you are hungry. You eat a simple meal to satiate your hunger. Now you go to the market and see a sweet shop. An array of sweets and savouries are on display and your

mouth begins to water. You wish to satisfy your craving, but find yourself helpless - either because of ill health or an empty pocket. Yet the desire remains and makes you restless.

This is the platform for the analysis of desires. What is a desire and what is a necessity? Without eating bread, life cannot be sustained. But what about sweets? While the desire for bread is a necessity, the desire for sweets is an indulgence. Therefore, the restlessness over sweets is unnecessary. We can protect ourselves from this sorrow by the control of desires. This is the path of austerity.

History repeatedly shows us how the greatest of emperors were not satisfied with all their possessions and spent their lives in the pursuit of desires. Rāvana had such a big harem, so many queens, each one more beautiful than the other. Yet his mind was not satisfied and he craved for Sītā. What did he find? Not Sītā, but his doom.

Another story that I like to recount from Jaina history is that of King Kūnika. The son of King Śreṇika, the maternal grandson of King Ceṭaka of Vaiśālī, he was a devotee of Lord Mahāvīra. He employed many people and paid them well to bring news about Lord Mahāvīra's well being. Unless he was assured that his Lord was well, he would not partake of water or food. Such was his ardent devotion. But he had many flaws in his character. He was extremely self-indulgent, headstrong and greedy.

King Kūnika had a younger brother who owned two priceless possessions - an elephant and a necklace. Kūṇika's queen, Padmāvatī, had an eye on the necklace and the elephant. For her, the entire kingdom was worthless without these two possessions. The king loved her and was so blinded by his love for her that he lost his sense of discrimination and duty. He asked his brother for the necklace and the elephant although it was an inappropriate demand.

How can anyone suddenly relinquish their rights over much-cherished objects? Through eons of time, only one such as Bhīṣma or Rāma is born, who can sacrifice their kingdoms

and themselves for the happiness of others. The prince was stunned by such a demand on the part of his brother, the King. Realizing that the palace was unsafe for him after refusing such a demand, he stealthily left his brother's kingdom and went to Vaiśālī which was under the rule of his maternal grandfather, Ceṭaka.

Kūṇika sent a messenger to king Ceṭaka, asking for the prince to be returned to him along with the elephant and the necklace. Ceṭaka responded fearlessly to such an unjust demand saying, "Is your greed not fulfilled even with such an enormous kingdom that you are now attempting to snatch away your brother's rights? This is injustice of the highest order. The republic of Vaiśālī has always supported justice and protected those who have sought refuge within its walls."

Well, the obvious outcome of this was war. Kūṇika plunged into the battlefield with his army. On the other side, Ceṭaka prepared for war with the eighteen democratic states of Kāśī Kauśala.

King Ceṭaka was a follower of non-violence, and abhorred bloodshed. But if the call of duty led him to battle, he was ready for that as well. He believed that to tolerate injustice is an injustice in itself. He adhered to the rules of right and lawful battle. He had vowed that he would attack only in defense or to vanquish injustice and never to wage war on the innocent. When such humane values are incorporated in war it makes it a religious battle, that which is done for the sake of duty.

The land of Vaiśālī became drenched in gory bloodshed. Within ten days Ceṭaka's arrows became the death sentence of the ten princes. The battlefield became a burial ground.

Kūṇika began to lose heart. His friends from his previous incarnation, Śakrendra and Camarendra, gave him sound advice, "It is difficult for you to win this battle with Ceṭaka; particularly when right is not on your side. Please refrain from this stubborn attitude", they implored.

But Kūṇika was not prepared to listen to anyone. When the

mind has gone astray, the best of advice has only reverse effects. He said, "I don't want advice, I want only help. Help me in this battle and victory will be mine." Thus, he remained stubborn. It is a long and terrible story, but what we must reflect on is this - what did Kūṇika eventually gain after so much struggle? A defeated Vaiśālī and heaps of dead soldiers. A victory which is much more dreadful than defeat. You will not find another instance of human slaughter of such magnitude in the history of ancient times, apart from the battle of the *Mahābhārata*.

What was the root of such a tragedy? One unrestrained, uncontrolled desire! A thoughtless greed which had no necessity or importance in life. Just think, did Kūṇika's kingdom lack in elephants? Or necklaces? So why was such a terrible battle waged? Just to satiate his blatant desires? The battle of desires was not won even after the bloodshed of lakhs of innocent people. The lust for wealth, woman and land has always sown the seed for battle.

The message that resonates loud and clear is that desires cannot nurture life, rather, they are the reason for destruction and sorrow. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise control over desires.

After the conquest of Vaiśālī, Kūnika's desires took greater flight. He now aspired to become an emperor of many kingdoms. When he expressed this desire to Lord Mahāvīra, the Lord explained to him, 'Kūṇika, this ambition is mere hopelessness, an empty shell. There are already twelve *cakravartīs*. In this *avasarpiṇī kāla*, there cannot be any more *cakravartīs*. Kindly close your doors to such impractical dreams. Listen to me and accept that the outcome of negative deeds will always be negative."

But Kūṇika did not heed the good advice. You will now ask me - if he was such an ardent devotee of the Lord, then why did he not listen? When an evil spirit comes between God and man, it steers man away from God. Kūṇika's pride and ego became a demon. His desire to become a *cakravartī* did not subside even with Mahāvīra's words of wisdom.

Kūṇika knew that Mahāvīra's words held absolute truth. No power in this world could alter that truth. But look at his audacity - he refused to give up his negative resolve. The dark clouds of desire had blanketed his mind and heart so that he could no longer behold the rays of truth.

He resolved to make his dream of becoming a *cakravartī* come true. He could not acquire the precious gems required for the coronation of a *cakravartī*. So he duplicated fourteen gems. Along with his powerful troops and allies, he set out to gain victory over the six regions.

During this voyage of victory, he reached the entrance of the Tamittrā cave in Vaitāḍhya mountain. The deity of the cave questioned him, "Who are you and why have you come here?" Kūṇika replied, "I am a *cakravartī*. I am on my way to attain victory over the six regions. The deity laughed at Kūṇika's foolishness and took pity on him, "Oh king! Go back. In a wave of false ambitions, you seem to have lost the discrimination between what is appropriate and what is not. This era has already seen twelve *cakravartīs*. Which *cakravartī* are you? To which period do you belong?"

Kūnika's pride rose even higher. He said, "I am going to become the next *cakravartī*. So what if there are already twelve, why can't there be a thirteenth one? If one has strength in his arms, who can stop him? Look at me - I have the fourteen gems, a large army, great and powerful kings as my allies. Who says that I cannot become a *cakravartī*? I am already one. Step aside. Do not hinder my path."

The deity realized what a stubborn and over-ambitious person Kūnika was. He advised him yet again. But when a person is lost in the storm of ambition, he cannot be redeemed easily.

Kūṇika crossed his limit and challenged the deity and as a result, met his end. His soul left his body and found the path to hell. With his own hands, he destroyed himself. Pride and attachment - both are a hindrance in the path of self-purification; they lead to total destruction.

Kūṇika is no more with us. So also have Rāvaṇa, Jarāsandha and Duryodhana left this world. But what we need to examine is this - do their negative impulses of desires, wants and pride still reside within us?

A person works hard in life to gain pleasure and happiness. But when will one find that happiness? Just as an object is not possessiveness, an object is not even happiness. Happiness resides neither in a kingdom nor in wealth. These are inert. But joy is a form of consciousness; it is dynamic. An Upanisadic sage has proclaimed: Joy is *Brahman*.[5]

This joy is the central purpose of life. It is consciousness. This implies that it is not necessary to run after desires to attain happiness. It is necessary to exert control over desires.

Do not allow yourself to get entangled in the web of calculations wherein you will constantly be trapped in counting what you have attained and what is still pending. Lord Mahāvīra said:

This thing is with me and this is not with me.[6]

He who is trapped in the whirlpool of this calculation will be drowned in its currents. The path of joy lies in contentment. You must try to find joy in whatever you have acquired until now and whatever you can acquire with your efforts and destiny. Let your desires be contained within this framework. Make a conscious attempt to stop desiring that which cannot be yours. Give up worrying about acquiring that which will be of little or no use to your life.

Lord Mahāvīra describes this principle of life as the vow of limiting desires. It demands setting a limit on endless desires. When desires are limited, needs also get limited; when needs get limited, then conflicts, tensions and contradictions in the journey of life also begin to reduce. Moving beyond conflicts leads to peace, happiness and joy. Finally, such pure joy is the ultimate truth of life.

5 ānando brahmeti vyajānāt
6 imaṁ ca me atthi, imaṁ ca natthi'

Religion in Everyday Life

RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Merely reading books, endlessly battling with scriptures and memorizing a few thousand verses will not get you anywhere. Until the right vision does not emerge in your heart, until you don't become steadfast in truthfulness, until your faith does not stop wavering, knowledge will not dawn.

In the *Sthānāṅga sūtra*, Lord Mahāvīra has described four kinds of flowers. The first is that which has form and beauty, but no fragrance like the flame of the forest, the second has fragrance but no form or beauty like the Vakula, the third is that which has extraordinary beauty and fragrance like the rose, and the fourth is that which has neither beauty nor fragrance like the flowers of the medicinal plant swallowwort.

In the same way, Lord Mahāvīra spoke of human beings. He said:

There are four types of men - some give up the appearance of an aspirant but not righteousness, some abandon righteousness but not the appearance, some others forsake both while there are

others who give up neither (and remain steadfast in religion). [1]

This classification of human beings has a psychological foundation. What is noteworthy is that among human beings, he who has good appearance as well as righteousness is considered superior. That life which is lacking in either of these is not an ideal one. An ideal life is that which is rich in knowledge as well as character. It is in the integration of these two qualities that peace and joy are found. A life with knowledge but without character is like a flower which is beautiful but without fragrance. On the other hand a life of good conduct without knowledge is as incomplete. Life should not remain one-sided. A life which is multifaceted is an ideal life.

Indian culture considers knowledge as well as conduct to be integral aspects of a holistic life. Often a question is raised in philosophical circles - is religion more important for a progressive life or is philosophy. In the West, religion is a different stream from philosophy. But according to me, in Indian culture, there is no gap between religion and philosophy; here religion cannot be devoid of philosophy and philosophy cannot sustain without religion. Indian culture believes in a holistic and multi-pronged approach. For the progress and evolution of mankind, faith and logic have to co-exist. Faith without logic and logic without faith have no place in Indian culture. Rather it believes that faith finds its culmination in logic and logic meets its goal in faith. Faith is the foundation for religion but logic is the primary basis for faith. So the heart and mind must function in unison together towards a holistic culmination of an ideal life. The light of intelligence illuminates every beat of the heart and the power of faith strengthens every logic of the mind. If these two aspects do not synchronize, human beings cannot rise above darkness. Speaking of an ideal life, let us look at how an aspirant can enrich every aspect of his life? What is the path of an ideal life for a householder and an ascetic? How can we lead a life of vigilance and wisdom?

1 cattāri purisajāyā - rūve ṇāma ege jahai no dhammaṁ, dhamme ṇāma ege jahai ṇo rūvam ege rūve vi jahai, dhammaṁpi, ege ṇo rūvaṁ jahai ṇo dhammaṁ - Vyavahāra Sūtra 10

As long as a man is a householder, he is bound by his family, by society, or by the nation. To live in harmony with his surroundings, to be able to live comfortably, he needs certain material objects and spends his time accumulating them.

The ascetic, on the other hand, is free of these constraints. Therefore, some people believe that the path of the ascetic is different from that of the layperson, but this is not true. Both are seekers on the spiritual path. They tread the same path from within, only the ascetic's journey is faster while the layperson lags behind.

Having heard all along that they tread separate paths, you may wonder what I am saying. I would like you to reflect on this - if the path of the ascetic is that of non-violence and truth, then what is the path of the layperson? Is it that of violence and untruth? To become a householder, should one indulge in untruth, deceit or violence? Obviously the answer is - "No". This is the point I am making - that the path of the ascetic is also the path of the layperson. The non-violence of the ascetic is not different from the non-violence of the layperson. Neither is the value of truth any different.

In fact, what is distinctly different is that the layman is bound by family responsibilities, therefore his steps are not as swift. But the monk is not bound by such responsibilities. He is answerable only to himself. So his life is lighter and less burdened. Thus, although the manner and pace of their steps may be different, the path is the same.

If the paths the monk and the layperson choose to travel are in fact different, then it is cause for concern. The goal of the monk's path is liberation. So, if the layman's path is different, then we have to ask ourselves, "Is there a path which is different from the path of liberation and yet a beneficial one? For if it is not beneficial, then why would the layman adopt it?" If the layman's path is not that of liberation, is it merely that of accumulation of worldly wealth? Ultimately, what is the use of performing the duties of a householder? Will his *sādhanā* not benefit his present life and his after-life? Is his way not the path of liberation?

There are only two ways - the direct path to liberation and the indirect worldly path. The worldly path is full of *āsrava* or karmic influx. The path of liberation is *saṁvara* or blockage of karmic influx. The road that leads to worldly wealth is also that which leads to the increase of karmic burden. The direct path to liberation is that which reduces karmic burden.

An ascetic in his life treads this path illuminated by the Three Jewels of right vision, right knowledge and right practice. And this is the path and the goal of the layperson as well. What is different is the levels at which they follow their vows of truth and non-violence. When Ācārya Umāsvāti was asked what was the path of liberation, he answered:

Right vision, right knowledge and right practice constitute the path to liberation.[2]

The term 'right' refers to an enlightened state. Thus vision, knowledge and practice in their enlightened state are the Three Jewels which illumine the path of liberation. In other words, until the right vision does not dawn in your heart, until you don't become steadfast in truthfulness, until your faith does not stop wavering, knowledge will not arise. Merely reading books, endlessly battling with scriptures and memorizing a few thousand verses will not get you anywhere. Right knowledge can arise only when one becomes steadfast in truth. Lord Mahāvīra has reiterated the same truth:

Without faith, there is no knowledge; without knowledge there is no virtuous conduct; without virtues there is no annihilation of karmas and without annihilation of karmas, there is no liberation.[3]

The logical conclusion is that until the vision dawns, knowledge cannot arise. When knowledge arises, the flame of truth will shine before us. Only then can the difference between the worldly existence and the realm of liberation be understood.

---

2 samyagdarśana-jñāna-cāritrāni mokṣa-mārgah – Tattvārtha Sūtra 1.1

3 nādaṁsanissa nāṇaṁ, nānena vinā na huṁti caranaguṇā aguṇissa natthi mokkho, natthi amokkhassa nivvāṇaṁ – Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 28. 30

Until vision and knowledge are not crystallized, what practice can one adopt? How can conduct ever be pure without knowledge? He who has not followed the right practice cannot attain liberation and everlasting peace. To attain liberation, one has to be steadfast in the path illuminated by these Three Jewels.

The rule is the same whether one is a layperson or an ascetic. The ascetic's meditation may be absolute, while the layman may meditate just partially, but both meditate on these Three Jewels. It is said that though the layman treads the path of liberation, he gets entangled in the maze of worldly attachments. Therefore, he may reach heaven, but not beyond. [4] He does not reach the abode of liberation directly. This is because his *sādhanā* is incomplete. He needs to endeavour a lot more to reach the abode of liberation. The same holds true for the monk as well. In today's world so full of sin, it is not assured that even a monk can achieve liberation in one lifetime. He has to go to heaven and then be reborn again. And in this manner he has to go through many such cycles of birth and death before his soul is free of its karmic bonds and ready for its final journey to the abode of liberation which lies beyond the realms of heaven.

A householder cannot escape the responsibilities of his family and society. He cannot justify any act of irresponsibility by comparing himself to the monk who he believes does not serve the society and nation in a practical way. The monk severs his ties with society to enter a way of life with a very special focus, but the householder does not do that. And moreover, the monk does serve the society and nation, but in a very different manner.

The primary purpose of water whether in a pot or a river is to quench thirst. Similarly, be it an ascetic or a layperson, the

4 The Jaina belief is that heaven is attained as a reward for good karmas. When the duration of the reward gets over, the soul returns to this world. Heaven and hell are all part of the transmigration cycle As long as negative and positive karmic bonds exist, transmigration exists. Liberation is the cessation of all karmas. It is beyond the realms of heaven. The scriptures also say that in this present cycle, because of the deterioration of values and conduct, the doors of liberation are shut. So pious souls can attain heaven as a reward of their meritorious deeds, but not liberation.

primary goal of human life is to attain liberation by adopting the vows of non-violence and truthfulness, thereby blocking the flow of karmic influx.

Until a person is operating within a family and has a reciprocal interaction with the world, he cannot be absolutely free of possessiveness. He cannot live his life by begging for alms like the ascetic. Thus there is a framework within which a layperson must acquire his possessions. This framework keeps his possessiveness in check. A householder must learn to mark his limits and earn his livelihood accordingly. He must provide for himself as well as for his family and community.

Given that certain possessions are necessary in life, you may ask - is there any dictum for how these possessions must be acquired? Ācārya Hemacandra and other great seers speak of wealth acquired through righteous means.

The source of earning should be just and righteous. [5]

A householder acquires wealth as well as luxuries, but he must not gain his wealth by unjust methods. His wealth must always reflect his honesty and hardwork. Such wealth will not be tarnished by sin. On the contrary, wealth that is acquired by injustice and exploitation is sinful and can never have everlasting benefit. Wherever such wealth travels, it causes misery, hatred and jealousy.

How well our Ācāryas have explained this intangible difference! They were indeed great idealists with a realistic approach to life. They did not give impractical sermons that a person who stays in the framework of a family should not acquire necessary possessions. Jainism does not believe in such imaginary ideals. Those who live in the flights of imagination can never attain great heights in life.

The conflicts of life cannot be battled in the darkness of ignorance. The householder should exercise vigilance and always ask himself the question, "Have I earned my money from a legitimate and justified source or otherwise?"

5 nyāya-sampanna-vibhavaḥ – Ācārya Hemacandra

Even a monk needs food; life needs sustenance. Although the monk does not earn his livelihood, he must be vigilant while accepting alms from a householder. Before accepting anything, he must ask the question:

How was this food prepared? [6] For whom was it prepared? How much quantity has been prepared? Have I in any manner contributed to this preparation? Has the householder made it as part of his daily routine, or has it been specially prepared for me?

If he is dissatisfied by the answers, he must not accept the food. Thus the monk should be vigilant about 'production' and 'source' Likewise, the householder should also remain vigilant in such matters, "Where has this food come from? In what form? Does it enrich my life? Does it harmonize well within my framework?"

Jaina culture advocates abstinence from activities that involve violence and trades and professions which breach the priniciple of non-violence. Jainism propounds vigilance and careful scrutiny in whatever one does, whether it is activities of domestic life which defy the principle of non-violence in small ways or setting up of factories and industries which involve destruction of life-forms on a large scale. Although agriculture does infringe upon the principle of non-violence because of the destruction it causes to living organisms in the soil, it is not considered a sinful deed. Rather, it has been advocated as a positive activity for a vegetarian way of life.

Indian culture has always given a seat of honour to agriculture. India is primarily an agricultural country and even today, a majority of the Indian population constitutes the rural farmer. Agriculture is the first step towards non-violence, since it can be a very influential medium to steer one away from non-vegetarianism and to establish vegetarianism. There cannot be a more domitable force than agricultural activity to counteract the rising preference for non-vegetarianism. It is on this basis that in India, agriculture is considered the divine spirit of non-violence.

In Vedic terminology, an agriculturist is known as the Son

6 kassaṭṭhā keṇa vā kaḍam! – Daśvaikālika Sūtra 5 153

of the Earth. According to Jaina tradition, Lord Ṛṣabhadeva was the person who first propagated agriculture as a way of life in India. He initiated the people of his time into the art of agriculture. In that bygone period agriculture was absolutely necessary for the development of the human race. The Jaina tradition refers to agricultural activity as "*ārya karma*" - the activity of the noble man.

The popular aspirants of Jaina tradition themselves indulged in agricultural activity, thus giving it an important place in Jaina history and culture. Of course there were those in the middle ages who labelled it as a violent activity, but the chief propogators of Jaina tradition referred to agriculture as "*ārya karma*".

The middle ages were a time when moral values deteriorated and the very meaning of the vows of non-violence and non-possessiveness changed, allowing man to commit acts that were hitherto considered sinful and violent. This also had an effect on the role of agriculture and soon it was demoted in the social context as the profession only meant for the lower strata of society.

Thus, somewhere along the way, the zeal with which our forefathers began this crusade against violence has become diluted with the long passage of time. Many people gave up agriculture considering it to be a sinful activity. To prove their point, they started looking for parallel reference in the *āgamas*, but nowhere in the *āgamas* was there a reference to agriculture being an activity of intense sin. It is stated in the āgamas that the result of a sinful activity is the passage to hell. Now just imagine, if agriculture is falsely propagated as a sinful activity, how can one expect anyone to follow it as a way of life? The masses were discouraged from considering it as a means of earning because what was the point of hardwork if it took one to hell, they reasoned. And so it came to be that such false arguments influenced the minds of the people and the Jains steered away from agriculture.

Actually, the reason for propounding the production of food grains through agriculture was a means to steer people

away from non-violence and non-vegetarianism. The aim was to grow fruits and vegetables so that we could work towards a purer and more pious way of life. This is why Jaina culture advocates agricultural activity as an *ārya karma*, a noble activity which does not infringe severely on the vow of non-violence.

Once, an aspirant posed a question that if the source of wealth is justified, why is wealth still considered undesirable?

I answered in keeping with our religious tradition that there are two sources of wealth. One acquires wealth, success and a good birth on account of auspiscious karmas. But based on one's religious or irreligious impulses, this wealth will either lead to the path of virtue or the path of vice. If his religious practices are good, he will move from a good birth to a better one. On the contrary, if he indulges in irreligious activities, he will move from a good birth to a bad one.

In both the instances, the wealth is acquired from a meritorious source, but while one leads to the path of sublime happiness and success (*puṇyānubandhī puṇya*), the other leads to failure and frustration (*pāpānubandhī puṇya*). When wealth arises from the former source, it gives rise to positive impulses in the mind of the recipient. His feelings and thoughts become pure, he spends his money for the welfare of humanity, he looks for opportunities to make positive use of his wealth and when the opportunity arises, he feeds the hungry and clothes the naked. Such actions fill him with peace. Before giving, while giving and after giving he feels great joy throughout. Grudge, regret and repentance do not touch him ever.

Such wealth that has come from the right source will later give rise to further merits. This is that crop which will never fall short, for it has been sown in the fields of merit and will harvest further merit.

Such a fortunate *puṇyānubandhī* person moves from joy to joy, ecstasy to ecstasy, and thus traversing the journey of life in such a befitting manner, reaches the abode of liberation.

Pāpānubandhī puṇya has the opposite effect. Before he

acquires wealth, the person makes many meritorious plans, but they vanish from his mind once the wealth is acquired. Such wealth fills his mind with darkness, erasing all positive thoughts. Experiencing pain and regret at the thought of charity, he recoils from any such intentions. And despite this, if he still performs charity due to unavoidable circumstances or societal pressures, he experiences a deep sense of regret and loss. Thus, he is full of negative emotions before as well as after undertaking the act of charity. The loss of his wealth pains him like a scorpion's sting.

Keeping these two descriptions in mind, you can decide whether the wealth that you have acquired is from *puṇyānubandhī puṇya* or from *pāpānubandhī puṇya*.

I am sure that every follower of Jainism must be familiar with the story of Mammaṇ *Seṭh*. Let me state it in brief; it has a very interesting twist.

Mammaṇ *Seṭh* of Rajagruhi was an extremely wealthy man. It is said that he owned wealth amounting to ninety-nine crores. But he held on to his wealth and never enjoyed it. In fact, he did not allow his own sons to either wear decent clothes or even eat a sumptuous meal. Finally, insult added to injury and one day his sons decided to confront him.

They felt that they could not go on living without proper food or clothes despite their father being so wealthy. They reasoned with him that someday his wealth would be inherited by them. In the meanwhile, he could protect his wealth like a hen would her eggs, but that he should give away some of it to them so that they could invest it in business and live their lives as they chose.

The *Seṭh* said, "I am ready to give you some property, but I will take it back with interest."

"But we are your sons!" they exclaimed.

To which he responded, "You may be my sons, but how can I let you squander away my hard-earned money? I do not ask you for your earnings, but I insist upon taking an interest on the principal amount that I give you."

Finally, the sons agreed to his condition. They said, "Alright, we will go to a bigger city and earn there." So saying, each one took his share and left.

With his sons gone, the old *Seṭh* started sculpting a bullock using his gold, silver and precious stones. He put all his wealth into this venture. He then aspired to make another bull using more wealth. "Of what use is a solitary bullock?" he thought. Since he had no wealth left, he would go to the jungle much before daybreak each day, collect wood and sell it to acquire the wealth to waste in his venture. Such was his need to possess that it left him devoid of any wisdom or peace. What a strange phenomenon possessiveness can be!

When King Śreṇika heard about Mammaṇ *Seṭh*, he was perplexed and approached Lord Mahāvīra. In response, Mahāvīra narrated an account of Mammaṇ *Seṭh's* previous life.

"Mammaṇ *Seṭh* was very poor in his previous life. Once during a grand meal in the community, *laḍḍūs* were distributed to the poor. He did not eat his *laḍḍū*, but kept it away. He thought that he would eat it when he felt hungry. After a while, he sat at the bank of a lake on the outskirts of the village and was about to eat his *laḍḍū* when he saw a monk pass by. He thought, 'What an auspicious opportunity to offer alms to a pious person! Let me give *āhāradāna* (the charity of food).'

With this noble intention, he invited the monk and pleaded with him to partake of the *laḍḍū*. Finally, the monk relented and sat down to eat with him. The *laḍḍū* was delicious. It was so tasty that his charitable impulse was replaced with instant regret. He started thinking - 'Oh! Why did this monk have to come just as I was about to eat? As a monk, his devotees must surely feed him tasty *laḍḍūs* every day. Where do I ever get anything as delicious? What a misfortune! I have never had any such visitor earlier. Then why today? And why did I become so impulsive? Oh, why did I waste my *laḍḍū*?'

Thus, he began to regret his decision. His karmic baggage increased with *pāpānubandhī puṇya*. The consequences of this are

so extensive that they are carried forward to this lifetime of his. So, although he has the blessings of Goddess Lakṣmī in abundance in this birth, he is not able to spend his wealth wisely."

Lord Mahāvīra explained that when a meritorious deed is accompanied by a negative emotion, it is as though nectar has been poisoned. This is a matter for introspection. When a person looks within, it will become apparent that sometimes he is caught at the crossroad of contradictory emotions. A high and noble thought can be accompanied with a negative emotion. Thus, when merit and demerit interlock in our contemplations, then *pāpānubandhī puṇya* is generated.

A person who has gathered *pāpānubandhī puṇya* will later get trapped in wealth which can never be spent wisely.

The ancient Ācāryas have rendered prayers in this regard, "Oh Lord! May I acquire wealth, but along with it the wisdom to use it well. May I acquire property, but along with it the noble intention to put it to good use. May I use it in a manner that it will benefit me as well as the society at large. Oh Lord! Bless me with a good heart!"

We find many such references in Indian scriptures too. Their aim is always to initiate in a wealthy person the impulse of noble intentions and righteous actions. Acquiring wealth is meaningful for the person who can put it to good use, who can broaden and brighten his path, illuminate his journey and use that wealth to construct his life positively.

Such spiritual revolution, whenever it happens, is a cause for celebration. In fact, whenever such a revolution has occurred as a phenomenon, it has been celebrated by mankind in the form of festivals. Most festivals always have a deeper significance than just the pomp and ceremonies. They enrich our lives by keeping great events in memory. They help us recapitulate our spiritual beliefs and value systems. As I was telling you, the agricultural revolution in the period of Lord Ṛṣabhadeva was a great milestone. When an aspirant stands at the verge of a revolution and moves on a brighter path by overcoming

obstacles with his spiritual energy, then there is cause for happiness and celebration. During the agricultural revolution, celebration came to the masses in the form of the *Holīkā* festival. This comes year after year as a representation of our tradition and culture. On this auspiscious occasion, we greet each other and experience social happiness and well being. During this *Holīkā* festival, the *Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* shed their differences and celebrate with each other. No discrimination remains on this festive occasion. This is a pious symbol of our ancient culture. This festival teaches each and every person the lesson of love and merges the boundaries of high and low. In the present time, some corruptions have crept into this festival. Bad words and bad actions are being considered an important aspect of this festival. But this is not how it used to be. It is good that we laugh and make others laugh with us, but how can we laugh at the expense of others by ridiculing them and justify it as a tradition? There should be laughter in life, but not one that causes hurt. We celebrate festivals even today, but only as a celebration of the body. The soul is forgotten. The need of the hour is to understand the soul of any festival, not merely its materialistic pleasures. Only then joy and celebration will take a true form. The festival of *Holī* will be worthwhile if we find true happiness in togetherness.

The festival of *Dīpāvalī* is also a famous festival of India. Just like *Holī*, this is also a social and national festival celebrated by one and all with great splendour. This is a question I am often asked - what is the aim of this festival? Among those who celebrate *Dīpāvalī*, no distinctions of creed and caste are considered. This is the primary reason why we celebrate this festival. When we question the reasons for celebrating any festival, then its fundamental form appears before us. Similarly, to understand the background of this festival, let us examine its natural implications. During the monsoons the humidity in the atmosphere rises making it an ideal time for insects and poisonous creatures to breed. The sky is covered with dark clouds, and the whole atmosphere seems to be shrouded in darkness. Due to the heavy downpour of rain it becomes

difficult for us to keep our homes clean and airy. Our homes become dreary and dark and our surroundings are slushy as well. Even the infinite stars in the sky are not visible. The mind of man gets fatigued in such situations. After the rainy season, when the sky clears and the slush dries up, we clean up our homes thoroughly. When the countless stars bejewel the silvery white night sky of *śarada pūrṇimā*, man's mind is again filled with joy. It is indeed time to celebrate. With great gusto we clean our homes. We revive our homes inside and out with fresh coats of paint. Then, with the advent of *Dīpāvalī*, we light our homes with rows and rows of lamps, dispelling the gloom of the monsoons. Our hearts dance once more with brightness and cheer. The light of love spreads its arms to embrace all. Therefore this is called the festival of lights. Dirt is the symbol of violence and cleanliness of non-violence. Discarding dust and gloom from our homes and surroundings is symbolic of discarding violence. Likewise, when we bring cleanliness and brightness into our homes and outside, we affirm non-violence. Today we have forgotten these deeper implications of festivals and are caught up in shallow rituals and mindless celebrations. The celebration of this festival is the celebration of non-violence, of culture, of precious values.

The ethical values of every tradition are a consequence of their philosophy. It is not possible that thoughts and conduct do not influence each other. All Vedic and non-Vedic traditions have stressed the importance of conduct along with thoughts. Even the *Cārvāka* philosophy, which is materialistic and atheistic, has some rules of conduct. Afterlife or heaven are not considered as rewards of an ethical life, however, they are considered important for social order. This is the reason why in Indian culture, emphasis is placed on a harmony of thoughts and action, knowledge and conduct, logic and faith, philosophy and religion. No society can function without integration.

If we look beyond the the arguments and debates regarding violence and agriculture in the middle ages, the only conclusion we can draw is that the primary conduct of Jaina culture and Jaina tradition lies in non-violence and non-possessiveness. There is

violence when we violate our ethical vows. We commit violence when we utter untruths, when we commit thefts, when we shun chastity and when we hoard excessive possessions. Therefore, these must be avoided at all cost. It is to do away with violence and to establish non-violence that so many vows of abstinence and restraints have been created. Non-violence in conduct and *anekānta* in thought, this is the orginal face of Jainism. *Ahiṁsā* is religion and *anekānta* is philosophy. Faith is religion and logic is philosophy. Action is religion and knowledge is philosophy. Buddhism also has two schools of thought - Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. Hīnayāna primarily focusses on the realm of conduct and Mahāyāna that of knowledge. Even if we look into Sāṅkhya and Yoga, we arrive at the same conclusions that Sāṅkhya is its philosophical aspect and Yoga is its aspect of conduct. The same is true of Uttara Mīmānsā and Pūrva Mīmānsā. The former is based on philosophy and logic and the latter is based on action and conduct. What I am trying to explain is that every tradition has its own philosophical position and its own code of conduct. There is not a single tradition in this world whose knowledge does not have a base in its conduct and vice versa. Not just Indian culture, even foreign traditions will reflect the same truth. Prophet Mohammad of Islamic religion has also propounded these two facets of life. Jesus Christ also stated the same in the Bible. The Taoist religious leader Laotse and the Chinese religious leader Confucius have given equal importance to knowledge and conduct.

I reiterate that human life is complete when knowledge is supported by conduct. One is meaningless without the other. Each one gives value to the other. If we want to tread the path of right conduct, we have to tread the path of non-violence and non-possessiveness. All religions have directly or indirectly propounded these ideals. They may be referred to differently. Whether termed as policy or love, service or brotherhood, an ethical way of life is what all religions propogate. It is the highest of all religions.

The Canvas of Life is Larger than the 'Self'

THE CANVAS OF LIFE IS LARGER THAN THE 'SELF'

Possessiveness resides not in objects, but in thoughts. It is an impulse, an impure state of internal consciousness. When consciousness brands external objects with the labels of desire and attachment, with the labels of yours and mine, they become objects of possessiveness, not otherwise.

In Lord Mahāvīra's reflections, non-possessiveness found as much importance as non-violence. Wherever he has spoken about abstinence from violence, he has propogated abstinence from possessiveness as well. Primarily violence is committed only for possessions, therefore, non-possessiveness is the *sādhanā* that complements non-violence.

What is possessiveness? Our instant response to this question is that if wealth, clothes, property, family and our bodies are possessions, then possessing all of these is possessiveness. The obvious question that follows is: If all of these objects lead to possessiveness, then how can one renounce them and still continue to live? For example, even though our body is a possession, can we renounce it and continue to live?

So, in this context, the ideal of non-possessiveness becomes an impossibility. Religious discourses that preach impractical ideals are meaningless. They serve no purpose at all.

Lord Mahāvīra has answered every question with the vision of many-pointedness *(anekāntavāda)*. Regarding possessiveness, he said that material objects, and also one's body and family fall under the category of possessiveness, and yet they do not. When asked, "Is an object possessiveness?" he stated, "It is and it is not." Does family fall under the category of possessiveness? It does and it does not. Is the body in the purview of possessiveness? It is and it is not. These cannot be counted as possessiveness, because, they are but objects. Possessiveness is an impulse, an impure state of internal consciousness. It is when consciousness brands external objects with the labels of desire and attachment, with the labels of yours and mine, that they become objects of possessiveness, not otherwise.

What this implies is that possessiveness resides not in objects, but in thoughts. Here we see a clear distinction between *graha* and *parigraha*, between possessions and possessiveness. '*Graha*' means to acquire an object in measured quantity and to use it appropriately. On the contrary, '*parigraha*' means to acquire objects indiscreetly without making any distinction between appropriate and inappropriate. Even in the absence of an object, if an intense craving for the object exists, then it is counted as possessiveness. Therefore, Lord Mahāvīra proclaimed: Attachment is possessiveness. The aspirant who is free of attachment, is non-possessive even if he is seated on heaps of gold and silver. Non-possessiveness is detachment or indifference.

Desire is the greatest bondage of all, the utmost cause for suffering. One who defeats desire attains liberation. Freedom from desire is freedom from the world. Therefore, Mahāvīra spoke about restraint on desires and ambitions as being the first and foremost goal. There are many spiritual seekers who have such a focused consciousness that they overcome all their desires, adopt the path of restraint and renunciation, and tread

the path of absolute non-possessiveness. But non-possessiveness is not the *sādhanā* only for the monks. To give it a social context, it has been structured in a manner that it is easy to adopt by a householder as well. Thus, the Great Seer cast aside the narrow and static definition of non-possessiveness and redefined it in a dynamic, contemplative context.

Mahāvīra stated that if it is not possible for a person to forsake all his desires and attachments, he can still gradually reduce his attachments with *sādhanā*. By limiting his desires, he can become a seeker of non-possessiveness.

Desires are endless like the sky. If you allow them more space in your life, they will invade your peace, thereby resulting in greater sorrow and unrest. If desires are controlled, worries and unrest will also reduce. To set a control on desires, Mahāvīra propounded the vow of limiting desires. This vow is another way of shedding ownership. When the householder Ānanda of Vaiśālī appeared before Lord Mahāvīra to adopt the vow of limiting desires, Mahāvīra explained to him, "Oh Ānanda! Limit your wants. Distribute your excessive wealth and possessions at least in part, if not completely. Beyond a stipulated limit, do not lay claim on wealth and property. Similarly, free even your pets and domestic helpers from the unlimited rights that you have claimed over them."

This was the pure inspiration to shed ownership, which successfully triumphed over many of the discrepancies prevalent in society due to wealth. When a person relinquishes his rights over excess wealth and property, then it is free to belong to society and nation. Thus automatically begins an internal process of social evolution and progress.

I have reiterated in many of my discourses that socialization is an important process in human evolution. A person who has a broad outlook is social by nature. According to sociology, one who is not socially sensitive is not considered a complete person. That man is a social animal is a principle that is unanimously and universally accepted. At the core of this principle lies the fact that a man cannot live without society. Sociologists make

a clear distinction between man's status as a social being and his behavioural patterns. They say that terming man as a social animal does not necessarily mean that he is a cultured and well-mannered at all times. Human beings are considered social because they need and desire human contact and company. Owing to certain circumstances, a person may stay in isolation for a short period, but he cannot live without human contact for an extended period of time. This impulse or need to be part of a group is man's innate quality. A human being is a part and parcel of society.

Working together, nurturing the feeling of collective responsibility and working towards the welfare of others defines the purview of socialism. Even if an individual begins life in a selfish and self-centered manner, he learns social consciousness and develops a sense of responsibility. According to the principles of sociology, in the formative years of life, narrow, egoistic and selfish desires reign high Some of these even remain till the end of one's life. In fact some of these are so primary and internalized that man spends his entire life in controlling and justifying them. Some thinkers say that socialization is an act in society where an individual tries to make an impression on his fellow companions, as a result of which different social behaviours gain acceptability and are harmonized. We can look at socialization from two view points - first, where society influences the individual and second, where an individual reacts to society. In the first instance, this is a process by which society imparts culture over generations and by accepting and affirming the collective social life, harmonizes the individual. It aims at developing those qualities, talents and disciplines of an individual which are necessary to him as a social being. These help to internalize and express specific ambitions, values and lifestyle of the individual which are unique to his particular society. Thus, individuals learn to perform certain social activities which are necessary in order to be an integral part of their specific societies. This is an influence not just on those children and outsiders who enter society for the first time, but every member of the society.

From the second point of view, i.e. where an individual reacts to society, socialization happens when a person living in a society adopts the conduct, behaviour and habits of that society in smaller or larger measures. Every person begins to live according to the rules of society from childhood. A person who lives outside tries to adopt the ways of his new society. This is a life-long process Wherever he goes and wherever he stays, he adopts the values of that society. Whatever good or bad we see in a person's life is not just his own, but largely adopted from the environment in which he lives. The manner in which he understands his present from his past experiences and faces his future is an expression of his socialization.

This does not mean that he does not learn anything personally. He does. But most of what he learns are direct or indirect influences of his social interactions. This process of socialization is very rarely a generalized one. Discrepancies in attitudes and behaviour are always there. For example, a person may be able to socialize well with certain groups but not with some others. He may be a compassionate father and husband, but antisocial towards his servants and subordinates. On the other hand there are others who are selfish and unjust towards family and neighbours, but kind and generous towards their customers and clients. In a certain sense, socialization means involving oneself in social activities. The aim of socialization is to establish unity in diversity. The pillar of society is built with the bricks of independent beings. To cement them together for the overall welfare of both society and the individual is the true purpose of socialization.

Those who study sociology are well aware of the benefits of socialization. In my own view, one who cannot socialize leads a burdensome life. Happiness lies in the merging of one's personality for the collective life of society. The process of socialization can differ between societies because of differences in time or circumstances. However, it has and will always play a vital role in the evolution of mankind. Until the emotion of social benefit does not rise in the individual, he cannot be an integral part of society. A person of healthy social mentality will

not undertake any work which will not benefit society. He gives greater importance to social good rather than to personal gain.

The question is, what are the tools of socialization? A social outlook and social feelings. Each and every interaction between individuals is a step towards socialization. For example, for a new born baby, this process occurs within the family. As he grows and develops, his life gets connected with many groups. A child's initial contact is with the mother, then father, siblings and relatives. The same child grows up and socializes within towns, cities and then with the nation. When another nation attacks us and we find our country in danger, our social and patriotic impulses are stirred and we are ready to sacrifice our all for the nation. This is the highest form of the individual's socialization. Even though our country has many castes, communities and classes, yet in the process of larger socialization, we have established unity in diversity because our common welfare lies in the protection and order of the nation. When danger strikes we forget our differences and become one. How does this happen? It happens because of socialization. As the process of socialization develops in the individual, his life moves from personal to collective.

Just as there are tools that facilitate socialization, there are obstacles that hinder socialization. When this happens, the social growth of the individual gets arrested. However clever, intelligent and resourceful a person may be, if he cannot socialize and imbibe the qualities of his society and culture, he will be unable to specialize in any field of society. And when a person cannot specialize, how can he become successful? Specialization in any particular field is essential for socialization. It is a power which affirms and enhances a person's personality. However, specialization must be devoid of pride and ego. Pride is the most universal obstacle in the path of an individual's socialization. Whether a person is in the family, community or nation, he must think that his life is not just for himself, but for a larger structure. Just as sugar dissolves in a cup of milk, a droplet does not ask for an independent existence within the ocean. So also an individual who understands the larger framework of society

will not demand an autonomous existence, rather he will realize that it is in the welfare of society at large that his personal welfare lies too.

Some thinkers argue that society exists for the welfare of the individual, but an individual does not exist for the welfare of society. What this means is that when an individual hands over the reigns of his life to society, then society will in turn provide ample happiness to him. In my view, the happiest society is that where individuals believe in and respect the welfare of all. Always remember that in the welfare of society lies your own welfare and likewise, in the destruction of society lies your own downfall. To work for the welfare of society is every individual's duty. Until social feelings do not evolve in an individual, he cannot become strong. What is the existence and identity of a mere drop of water? But when that same drop merges into the ocean, it is transformed from small to mighty. The personality of a person develops in socialization.

In today's age, socialism is an important issue. The very mention of it is irksome to those who fear that with the advent of socialistic ideals in their society they would have to forfeit their personal wealth; for the ideal of socialism does not believe in individual property. Despite these misgivings, strangely enough, we see the influence of socialism, democracy and equality in the world today. There are so many different views regarding socialism that it is difficult to define its boundary. The socialists are divided amongst themselves - in fact, it is difficult to say who is a socialist and who is not. In my view, socialism is a principle which has expressed itself as a political movement. It is however an economic movement as well. The political and economic principles of socialism are integrated in such a manner that a clear division cannot be made between them.

Socialism is like a hat which has lost its shape because it has been worn by all. Regarding socialism, Ācārya Narendra Dev says, "Socialism desires to establish a society free of exploitation, rid it of the prevalent slavery, class differences and the resulting intolerances thereof. It aims to establish equality, equanimity

and brotherhood." But remember that brotherhood is born and develops in a place where collective and social impulses have developed in individuals. A scholar once said, "Socialism works in two places - in beehives and anthills." What this means is that honeybees and ants have strong collective social structures. Karl Marx has said that socialism aims to take man from helplessness to the world of independence. Thus we see differing views on socialism. But still we have to think about what socialism offers to society and the inherent need for every society to adopt it in today's world.

So what is socialism? This question is answered by calling it an ideal, a perspective and a way of life. In the present era, particularly in politics, socialism is a belief, a vibrant human revolution. If its political structure, as conceived by its believers and followers can be established in its true form in society, it will be a great blessing, never a curse. What does socialism require? This question is answered by saying that the basic requirement of socialism is to create a system whereby there is equal and fair distribution of land and property. It desires that society as a collective whole shares equal responsibility and power. The aim of socialism is the establishment of a classless society. It aims to organize society in a manner that will end the exploitation of one class by another, so that society will become a congregation of individuals based on co-operation and co-existence, where the progress of one individual will naturally mean the progress of another - where all will live together as a collective group. Socialism always prioritizes the collective rather than the individual. It ends exploitation of all kinds and ensures advancement of all.

I do not want you to think that I am justifying socialism as a political policy to you. Today's age is the age of politics. Therefore, it has become a common practice to look at every principle from a political perspective. This does not mean that socialism did not exist before this era. The kings in the times of Mahāvīra and Buddha were democratic in their approach to governance. Republicanism is an ancient form of socialism. In the present era, Mahatma Gandhi established *sarvodaya* and

Ācārya Vinoba Bhave gave it a detailed and refined definition. Again, this does not mean that sarvodaya did not exist earlier. Much before Gandhi, the great Ācārya Samantbhadra of Jaina culture used this term to explain Mahāvīra's social and religious systems of *tīrtha* and *saṅgha*. What the Ācārya meant is that in Mahāvīra's *tīrtha* and *saṅgha* lies the welfare, growth and evolution of all. *Sarvodaya* can never happen just for one society, one community or one caste. Where everyone's enhancement occurs, *sarvodaya* resides. In my own view, where the doctrines of non-violence and non-absolutism exist, there lies true socialism, true democracy and true *sarvodaya*. Today's socialism which rests on economy cannot provide a holistic answer because issues of existence and life cannot be solved by economic issues alone. For that, religion and spirituality are also needed. Food is not the only primary question. There is an issue larger than food, which is that an individual must recognize himself and understand his boundaries. If a person cannot know himself and his limits, then the concepts of socialization, socialism and *sarvodaya* are meaningless and futile for him. Society can prosper only when individuals know their limits

So how do we reduce the excesses in our lives, how can we limit our boundaries? As long as we have a living body, how can we be free of pleasures? Mahāvīra never spoke about man's liberation from necessities. He propitiated liberation only from unnecessary luxuries Therefore, he propounded the vow of limiting resources, not of relinquishing all resources necessary for living.

Enjoyment is the root of possessiveness. As soon as enjoyment gets limited within a boundary, possessiveness also gets limited. Thus, the vow of limiting the objects for one's use automatically leads to the vow of non-possessiveness.

Mahāvīra established the vow of limiting directions and geographical boundaries (*diśā parimāṇa*) as well. He also laid emphasis on the vow of imposing further restrictions only for a limited period of time. This included denying concessions in other vows (*deśāvakāsika vrata*). Thus vows were arranged to

facilitate following them in holistic manner. These vows were aimed at bringing about reformation and thereby a reduction in political and commercial exploitation between neighbouring villages, towns and even states, thus nurturing human society at large. Mahāvīra was opposed to the ideology of striving more than required to fulfil one's desires. Such excessive effort, he believed, was bound to overstep on another's boundaries, expectations and circumstances. Mahāvīra's vision was to create a society free of exploitation.

How can we overcome possessiveness? Mahāvīra observed that most people in exchange for charity, desire fame, popularity, power and heaven too. But charity should not be contaminated with an expectation to be rewarded. Such charity does nothing to eradicate poverty in society and in fact, increases the pride and arrogance of people. Mahāvīra regarded this mentality of charity as negative. Simply giving something to someone does not qualify as charity. Giving without expectations, distributing wealth for social upliftment, to give away with the feeling of brotherhood is true charity. He pronounced:

Both beget a noble birth: a householder who gives alms selflessly and a monk who is detached.[1]

When a benefactor gives out of compassion and caring, without feeling trapped by greed or worldly gain, then his charity is indeed true charity. The actual intention of charity is distribution. Lord Mahāvīra said:

There is no liberation for one who does not distribute his wealth wisely.[2]

Can we also become non-possessive in our thoughts? Lord Mahāvīra also closely examined the primary concept of non-possessiveness as pertaining to the mind. He said that every thought emerging from one's ego and every expression of attachment is nothing but possessiveness. All mental compulsions and false beliefs, such as one caste being superior to another, any

1 muhādāī muhājīvī, do vi gacchanti soggaim — Daśvaikālika Sūtra
2 asamvibhāgī na hu tassa mokkho – Daśvaikālika Sūtra

particular language being purer than another, differentiation in the status of men and women based on their physicality and forced traditional rituals were labeled by Mahāvīra as deep-seated possessiveness. He encouraged freedom from them. He clearly stated that humanity is one. It has no distinctions and disparities such as caste, society or nation. No single language can be considered as pure and eternal. Man and woman are the same; no one is superior to the other. Thus, all societal and caste distinctions were described by Mahāvīra as conditional and unnatural.

Lord Mahāvīra's reflections on non-possessiveness can be summed up in five major conclusions:

1. regulation of desires.
2. shedding ownership of resources that are beneficial to society.
3. establishment of a society free of exploitation.
4. detached distribution of one's resources for humane causes.
5. spiritual purification.

Thus we see that Lord Mahāvīra helped raise the human consciousness from the platform of personal attachment to social altruism, and thereby, a purer state of detachment and non-possessiveness.

Non-Possessiveness : A Universal Framework

NON-POSSESSIVENESS - A UNIVERSAL FRAMEWORK

The wise who have understood the essence of religion do not have any attachment for material objects, not even for their own bodies.

The lotus is a great source of inspiration in our lives. One who stays in this world like the lotus and worships its symbolisms knows no sorrow or fear. He becomes pure and pious like the lotus. Hence, it is not surprising that this beautiful flower holds an eminent position in Indian culture and tradition. Its analogy is given in every aspect of an individual's personality - lotus-face, lotus-hands, lotus-feet and lotus-heart. Even the eyes are said to be lotus-like. The entire body is compared to a lotus. It is an integral part of our spiritual perceptions as well. In one of his discourses, Lord Mahāvīra stated that an aspirant must remain in this world as a lotus remains in the pond. One who is detached like the lotus may stay anywhere for he knows no fear. The same has been stated by Lord Kṛṣṇā in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. He said:

Oh Arjuna! Remain detached in this world like a lotus in a pond.

A lotus blooms and blossoms in the slushy pond, but is not contaminated by the slush. Similarly, to remain unaffected by the trials and tribulations of this world is the greatest achievement of life. Just as a flower without fragrance, a life which has not the fragrance of compassion cannot reach out to other lives. That life which is full of beauty, fragrance and detachment like the lotus is blessed and praiseworthy.

Much has been already said about detachment, about non-possessiveness, what it entails and how the path of non-possessiveness should be followed. Today let us reflect on this in more detail.

The ideal of non-possessiveness is emphasized not just in Jaina thought, but by all spiritual masters and great social leaders as well. As far as values and principles are concerned, they may speak different words, but all their words point to the same value - of non-violence, of non-possessiveness, of peace, of contentment.

It is indeed heartening to see that even in these times when the focus of mankind is more on science and technology, experiments in spirituality also find a place. Otherwise there would be only one kind of experimentation - that of the material, the nuclear, the atomic. But here are two diverse streams of thought, if I may say so. While one is nuclear, the other propounds co-existence. Materialism on one hand and spiritualism on the other. Like life and death, poison and nectar, they co-exist in this large sea of humanity.

The slogan of the atomic experiment is: "I am the greatest power of the world, the undefined courage of the world. Either you bow before me or you die. He who does not have me, has no right to live in the world. Because in my absence he is not secure."

The slogan of co-existence is: "Come let us all walk together, sit together, live together and even die together. Our views are different, but not conflicting. Our bodies may be different but our minds are one. We have to live together and if need be, die together. As human beings, we can only live in co-existence; not

in disintegration and separation, nor in isolation and conflict.

Those who adopt the nuclear policy are seekers of power. Those who adopt the policy of co-existence seek universal brotherhood. The former are ruled by their bodies and the latter by their souls.

There is a lot of disagreement, unhappiness and confusion in today's political policies. This is because the ideal of 'policy' has been corrupted for selfish gains. A 'policy' is pure in itself, whether it is the policy of the rulers or the ruled. It aims to work for the overall good of mankind and not at destruction. Any new policy will have to stand the test of time, the test of life, the test of truth. It has to enhance a virtuous life, where confusion and protest have no recess, where selfishness and unrestrained desires undergo a sublime transformation.

Thinking along the same lines, let us reflect on religion. What is the aim of religion? It teaches us to live in harmony with each other. It teaches us to share in people's tragedies and sorrows as much as in their happiness. This feeling of togetherness is the true aim of religion. Religion and virtue are two sides of a coin and both are equally important to make progress in life.

All of us know that it is practically impossible to combine religious values with politics, especially in today's political scenario where selfishness and unrestrained desires are openly expressed. This echoes the death of humanism.

Buddha and Mahāvīra spread the message of religion to the whole world. They were born to inherit great thrones and lead nations, but they became spiritual leaders instead. Gandhiji spread the message of a virtuous life and was able to infuse religion into politics. In Gandhiji's words, good political policies are those that follow religion. Those policies that are not motivated by the virtues of religion are unfavourable policies.

A leader should be virtuous and religious. According to Indian culture, a king is the epitome of justice. Where there is justice, there is religion. Virtue without justice is against religion.

Today India is a free democracy and the political policy of this democracy is the *pañcaśīla*. The main architect of *pañcaśīla* is India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. India, China and Russia - the three great powers of the world are allies today on the basis of *pañcaśīla*. This is the Gāndhīan or Nehruvian era's greatest gift to mankind. More than half the population of the world not only believes in *pañcaśīla* but also follows its principles. The rest of the world is now recognizing the importance of the *pañcaśīla* and it is fast spreading to other countries, especially Europe.

What I would like to talk about today is the common vision of all religious, political and social principles The political *pañcaśīla* is based on the principles of indivisibility, sovereignty, non-interference, co-existence and co-operation. These principles have a common echo of mutual interest in each other's development. Everybody develops when the nation develops.

Lord Buddha propounded five principles, which were known as *pañcaśīla*. *Śīla* means conduct or behaviour. These five principles are non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-intoxication.

In the 23rd chapter of the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, Keśi Gautama discusses the five teachings of Lord Mahāvīra. There is no difference between *pañcaśīla* and these five teachings. Both are similar and share the same thoughts. Like *śīla*, the word '*śikṣā*' is treated as principles of conduct. Four vows were advocated in a heretic's penance. The five teachings are non-violence, truth,non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness.

The five teachings of Vedic religion are similar to the five Jaina teachings, both in thought and in words. *Yama* means control, discipline. *Pañcha-yama* has been described in the *Yoga Sūtra* as the five principles of non-violence, truth, celibacy, non-stealing and non-possessiveness.[1]

Indian politics today is trying to work towards the *pañcaśīla*. This is not new to India as its religious systems have been

1 ahimsāsatyāstebrahmacaryāparigrahā yamā

following *pañcaśīla* for thousands of years. The political *pañcaśīla* is a lot similar to the Buddhist, Jaina and Vedic *pañcaśīla*.

Whether the progress of humanity is in the hands of kings or monks, it is possible only through co-existence and not through atomic experiments - this is the ultimate truth.

Mahāvīra stated that disputes and wars between nations can be resolved by non-violence. His goal was to spread the ideal of non-possessiveness thereby creating contentment in the 'self'. To be attracted to that which is not part of the 'self' is to be tempted to obtain the objects of luxuries in others' lives, he said.

The important thing is to set a limit. Of course, your boundary must be realistic. If a rich man who has millions sets a limit for trillions, it is hardly in keeping with the principle behind the vow. In doing so, he is merely taking a name-sake vow of *icchā parimāna* but not actually adhering to the primary aim of the vow. The point is to set a limit on need, desire and greed.

The implication is that where there is desire, greed and attachment, there is possessiveness, whether the objects of possessiveness exist or not. Where there is no attachment, even if objects are as many as possessed by an emperor, there is no possessiveness. Therefore the Ācāryas say that even if monks possess objects, they are not 'possessive of' them. As stated by Lord Mahāvīra, "Attachment is possessiveness."

Possessiveness, accumulation, avarice, desire, greed, attachment and delusion - all these are synonyms. Just as fat added to fire inflames it further, so also accumulation and possessiveness ignite the flames of avarice

Which are the areas of life where we see maximum possessiveness? My wealth, my family, my position, my strength, my language - this notion of me and mine is born from possessiveness. Materialism is the primary target of possessiveness. Man accumulates objects and wealth to protect himself. But, do they really protect us? Mahāvīra has stated that wealth can never protect anyone. The desire for wealth and power causes delusion in man's mind. Wealth gives birth to desire and

power gives birth to pride; both these negative emotions create obstacles rather than enhance life.

What is the path that can enhance life and bring joy? Lord Mahāvīra said, "Relinquish all desires. This is the pathway of joy." If you do not have the inner strength to relinquish all your desires, at least attempt to tread a partially developed path to happiness by limiting your desires. There are many objects of enjoyment in this world. Material wealth has always been a source of enjoyment, but has it brought about true happiness or peace? So, whether gradually or all at once, one must relinquish the desire for possessions if one wants to find contentment. For the worldly beings, there is no greater bondage than possessiveness.

I ask you a simple question - who has greater possessiveness, a man who lives in a hut or an emperor who lives in a palace of gold? If you think this question is ridiculous, let me tell you that possessiveness should be gauged not by the quantum of possessions owned but by the quantum of vows of non-possession taken. Therefore, one cannot answer this question without knowing whether either of them had adopted vows of non-possessiveness. The poor man may possess just a hut, but if he has not vowed to restrict the number of objects he would like to possess, he is considered possessive. On the other hand, an emperor as rich as king Cetaka was considered non-possessive because he had adopted the vow to restrict the extent of his wealth. So among the two, though the poor man had fewer possessions compared to the king, it is he who is considered as having greater possessiveness.

In the world today, there is a great need for such people who follow this vow of non-possessiveness as prescribed by Lord Mahāvīra. The rich must reflect on the greed that drives them to earn so much for themselves and their families. Embracing the whole of humanity in your fold will make you a wiser and nobler person. It will empower you to stake your life for your country rather than make the fabled snake out of you, who in the need to guard its treasure gets glued to it.

He who takes the vow of non-possessiveness must be steadfast in setting the boundary of his possessions. One can set as ambitious a limit as one wishes. For example, you may own one mansion, but you can take a vow to restrict your ownership of property in the years to come to five or ten or even twenty mansions - but not more. Imagine that there is a poor man who has not even bread to eat. While establishing his boundary, he has the foresight to think that although at present he has nothing, he may earn some wealth in the future. Thinking thus, he establishes a boundary of striving to earn rupees one lakh only. He vows not to acquire beyond that. He has now restricted his desire, and his desire is equivalent to a drop in the ocean. From the unlimited wealth in this world, he establishes a boundary and becomes detached towards the rest of the wealth in this world. Such a man is said to be non-possessive.

When one realizes that possessiveness is the cause of restlessness and discord, he then adopts the vow of non-possessiveness so that he may never tread the path of unnecessary accumulation. One who continues to think of accumulation even after adopting the vow has adopted it only to earn fame and position in society.

Once a vow is taken, it must make a tangible difference in one's life. The greed and restlessness that resides in the heart before adopting the vow must diminish after the vow is adopted. If not, the vow has failed to create any positive influence on his life. An Ācārya has said:

Possessiveness is the cause of violence, which in turn leads to the cycle of birth and death. [2]

Man indulges in different kinds of sins only because of his possessiveness. Therefore, one who has become an aspirant and adopts the vow of *icchā parimāṇa* must gradually reduce his possessiveness.

If attachment to possessions has not diminished from the

2 sansāra-mūlamārambhāsteṣāṁ hetuḥ parigrahah tasmādupāsakaḥ kuryādalpamalpaṁ parigrahe

heart, then adopting the vow is just an external charade. It has no meaning and is futile.[3]

What a clear vision! One who understands the negative consequences of possessiveness will naturally retreat from it. Even if he is caught in the framework of familial needs, he will always refrain from accumulating unnecessary possessions and will accept his wealth like a bitter pill or a necessary evil.

One must always be watchful of whether the wealth which is still in the possession of the aspirant is riding on the aspirant or whether the aspirant is riding on it. Be it a horse or a vehicle, it is for you to ride upon, not the other way round.

There have been great emperors and kings in India, but when the impulse of renunciation arose in them, they did it instantly. Like a snake which sheds its skin without looking back, they renounced their wealth and adopted monkhood When they became monks, they kept a few vessels and clothes, but without attachment to these objects. Where there is no attachment, there is no possessiveness.

An ascetic and a layperson, both have needs. It is not as though one wears clothes woven by the gods and the other by a weaver. A cloth is always woven by a weaver, whether it is adorned by an ascetic or a layperson. Then, how is it that the clothes of a layperson are considered objects of his possessiveness and the clothes that belong to an ascetic not so? Food when consumed by a householder is considered as greed and when it is put in a monk's vessel, simple alms?

An ascetic only keeps those objects which are required for his existence as subscribed by the scriptures. He renounces all his possessions through the three channels of body, mind and speech. Therefore, it cannot be said that he operates from a stance of possessiveness. By adopting the vow of non-possessiveness, he has vowed neither to acquire possessions by himself or through others nor to affirm those who indulge in such acts. Therefore, his meagre belongings are not considered as objects

3 cittentargrantha-gahane bahirnirgranthatā vruthā

of possessiveness. As Mahāvīra said:

> Possessing an object is different from the tendency of possessiveness. The Ācāryas speak of objects as possessiveness so that one may also remain vigilant and not become attached. It is only the attachment to these possessions that one has to be wary of. A person can travel lightly only when he has shed off the impulse of possessiveness. Verily, attachment is possessiveness.[4]

Our monks of bygone days used the example of flies as an analogy. A fly that sits on a crystal of sugar, enjoying its sweetness flies away even when a soft breeze blows by. But a honeybee is not swayed even by strong winds. Come what may, it remains glued to the honey, even at the cost of its life. A seeker must remain detached amidst objects of enjoyment like the fly in the above analogy. He can then instantly break away all ties.

I remember an incident about a person known as Khetanji. In his days of extreme poverty, he opened a shop in Calcutta. Luck favoured him and he became very successful. At that time, the cows of his village had no shelter and were living in extremely piteous conditions. The villagers decided to construct a cowshed, but they needed funds for such a venture. So they approached wealthy people in bigger cities. This is how they met Khetanji and requested him to help in this noble venture.

Khetanji said, "Staying here, I find it difficult to take care of my own house. How can I help you in your cause?"

The villagers responded, "It is our faith in you that has brought us this far. Kindly do not disappoint us."

He replied, "Alright, since you insist so much, I will give you some money, but I cannot be involved in any administrative activities. I also insist that you first get some donation from that other shop across the road and then come to me for my

4 jaṁ pi vatthaṁ va pāyam vā, kambalam pāyapucchanam taṁ pi sañjamalajjaṭṭhā, dhārenti pariharenti ya na so pariggaho vutto, nāyaputteṇa tāiṇā mucchā pariggaho vutto, iṁi vuttaṁ mahesinā --Daśvaikālika Sūtra 6.282/283

contribution."

When the villagers approached the other shop, they got a similar response. "First let the other shops make a donation. That is a bigger shop," they were told.

The distraught villagers went back and forth, but to no avail. Both did not budge from their respective positions. Finally, they said to Khetanji, "We are tired of going around in circles without any result. We have nothing more to say or ask."

This brought about a sudden change in Khetanji mind. He began to reflect, "Oh! Why have I behaved like this? These people built their hopes depending on me. I was the son of a poor man once, today I am so rich. Money is ephemeral. Will I get such a noble opportunity ever again? I must not disappoint these villagers."

On an impulse, Khetanji took one cloth, a small pot and a twine in his hand and stepped down from the shop. He said, "I am donating my entire shop to you. What did I have once? Nothing. Today I have earned so much money and respect as well I can open another shop anywhere else and earn once again."

The villagers were astounded. Khetanji did not enter his shop again. He opened another shop elsewhere. This is not just charity, it is renunciation of the highest order.

Man has amazing inner strength. When the impulse to renounce arises in him, it does not take him even a moment. It happens instantly. This is why Lord Mahāvīra never attached importance to possessions. His focus was always on the impulse of possessiveness.

The vow of non-possessiveness will yield positive results in lives to come, but for that, it must create an instant change in the present life style. Those who want a peaceful life and wish to spread joy must tread the path of non-possessiveness and non-violence as stated in Jainism.

Non-possessiveness and non-violence are principles that

compliment each other. Most religions in the world crown non-violence as the highest of all values and make an implicit reference to non-possessiveness, but Jainism recognizes it as an independent principle. Without adopting the vow of non-possessiveness, other vows cannot be effectively adopted. It is the pathway of exercizing restraint and contentment, thereby giving rise to detachment and simplicity. Lord Mahāvīra said:

One who accumulates for himself, directly or through others, or even approves of those who do so, cannot attain liberation.

If you look at ancient Jaina literature, you will see the great efforts of Lord Mahāvīra in this direction. He taught every lay disciple to stay within his boundary by adopting the fifth great vow of non-possessiveness. In commerce and trade, he taught not to cross one's justful rights. To step out of one's justful rights is to enter into conflict with one's fellowmen.

The eternal ideal of Jaina tradition is that every person must strive to fulfil rightful needs through rightful means. To accumulate beyond one's needs is considered as theft. Why do individuals, societies and nations fight? Because of this need to accumulate. Thus the seeds of non-violence can be found in non-possessiveness. From this viewpoint non-violence and non-possessiveness can be considered synonymous terms.

Ahimsā does not stand just for non-violence against another, it signifies the great austerity of universal love, compassion and service. Not to commit violence is just one aspect of *ahiṁsā* - an incomplete austerity. In its fullest sense, it is compassion (friendliness) towards all of humanity; it stands for nurturing humanity, protecting it, freeing it of pain and other such proactive steps.

In the *Praśna Vyākaraṇa Sūtra* and other Jaina *āgamas*, the term '*ahiṁsā*' has sixty synonyms, in which kindness, compassion, protection are included as well. *Ahiṁsā* is considered the loftiest of all ideals in the Jaina philosophical texts, *āgamas* and in the roads of *sādhanā*. In fact, all the religions in the world propound *ahiṁsā* as the highest of ideals. The Buddhist texts call a non-

violent person an *'ārya'*, which means a noble person. This principle is based on the contemplation:

All human beings fear punishment, and cherish their own life. Thus considering the joys and sorrows of others as one's own, one must never indulge in harming others nor instigate others to do so.[5]

The Vedic religion has also propounded non-violence as the steadfast principle and the highest of all religions: *"ahiṁsā paramo dharma"*. Non-violence is the greatest and purest religion. Therefore a person should not indulge in violence at any place or time. [6] Wish not for others what you would not wish for yourself.[7]

In this fleeting life, do not harm or hurt another, rather establish friendliness towards all creatures and move ahead on your journey. Do not remain in conflict with another.[8]

The *Koran* begins with *"Vismillaha Rahimanurrahima"* which means God is considered as the deity of compassion, not of violence. Hazrat Ali has asked to extend compassion even to animals and birds, "Oh human beings! Do not make your stomach the burial ground of animals and birds." The *Koran* has proclaimed that he who saves the life of another is like the saviour of all human beings.[9]

In his sermon Jesus Christ has also stated, "Let the sword remain in its hilt, because those who slay with the sword will be slayed in turn." Elsewhere also he has stated, "Love your enemies and seek God's pardon for those who torture you as well. If you love just those who love you, is that to be considered an achievement?"

---

5 sabbe, tasanti daṇḍassa, sabbesam jīvitaṁ piyaṁ attānam upamam katvā na haneyya na ghātaye -- Dhamma pada 1.21

6 ahiṁsā paramo dharmaḥ sarva-prāṇa-bhrutāṁvaraḥ tasmāt prānabhrutah sarvān mā hinsyānmānusaḥ kvacit -- Mahābhārata ādi parva 1/1/13

7 ātmanah pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret

8 na hinsyāt sarva-bhūtāni, maitrāyana-gataścaret nedam jīvitamāsādya vairam kuvarta kenacit --- Mahābhārata Śānti Parva 278/5

9 va man ahayā hā phaka annayā ahyannāsa jamīanah --- Qoran 5/35

The prophet of the Persian religion Zarathrustra proclaims, "Those who hinder people from leading a good life and recommend the slaughter of animals are considered evil by Ahuramajda (God of the Persians)."

The same sentiment of compassion and non-injury echoes in Lord Mahavira's words:

All creatures in this universe, whether small or mighty, human or otherwise, want to be free of sorrow and pain. All of them desire to live, none want life to end.[10]

Lord Mahāvīra is the primary messenger of non-violence. To date, it is the echo of his eternal messages that resound through our country. Do you know that a period existed two thousand five hundred years ago, which was considered a dark period when animal slaughter, non-vegetarianism and alcohol consumption was on the rise? Even women were deprived of human rights. The dark clouds of violence loomed large on the horizon. Lord Mahāvīra's discourses of peace and non-violence created a transformation in the minds of people and brought about holistic revolutions. Unfortunately those great ideals are forgotten in today's world. Nuclear warfare looms large on the horizon of fear. There is a need for non-violence to be recaptured in its pristine form. For the eternal happiness of mankind, *ahiṁsā* is the only available tool. There is no other alternative. It is true that one who perceives the world in a non-violent manner obtains a glimpse of the Supreme Seer.[11]

To collect or provide means for self-preservation does not breach the principles of Jainism. But to collect more than necessary or to create a power group definitely invites destruction. The policy of disarmament adopted by nations today, where every nation is expected to keep only limited weapons of warfare has been propounded by the Tīrthaṅkaras thousands of years ago. The rules and regulations regarding world peace that are laid down by nations today, were taught at religious discourses since time immemorial. Lord Mahāvīra initiated great kings

10 savve jīvā vi icchanti, jīviu na marijjiuṁ -- Daśvaikālika Sūtra 6.11

11 ahiṁsā bhūtānām jagati viditam brahma paramam

and emperors into Jaina religion and asked them to vow not to collect unnecessary weapons. Excessive resources makes a person arrogant and he gains a tendency to fight for every small position of power. Thus the Jaina seers attempted to eradicate the primary reasons for violence from the roots. They never supported wars.

Nowadays there are many religious leaders who have become puppets in the hands of powerful leaders. They claim that heaven is the abode for those brave people who will die in battle. They teach that a king or a political leader is God and therefore one must submit everything before him. But the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras have been steadfast in this regard. The *Praśnavyākaraṇa sūtra* and the *Bhagavati sūtra* explain a lot along the same lines. If you look into these scriptures, you will find a lot of literature that defies battle. You are aware that Kūṇika, the king of Magadha was such an ardent devotee of Lord Mahāvīra. The scriptures have exalted his devotion. Yet, Lord Mahāvīra did not support the battles initiated by Kūṇika, rather, he announced that Kūnika would go to hell for his misdeeds. Even though Kūṇika was angry with him, Mahāvīra remained steadfast in propounding non-violence. How could the incarnation of non-violence and peace support human annihilation? He taught that as long as an aspirant stays content within his limits, there is no conflict. Peace is destroyed when man enforces his power outside his territory onto the possessions of others. Yes, until the river flows within its bounds, the world only benefits from it. It causes no harm. But as soon as it gushes beyond its banks, it takes the form of floods and causes havoc and destruction. Same is the state of man. To be obsessed with possessions, not to enjoy them nor let others enjoy them is a sign of delusion, of attachment. It is the root cause of this worldly sojourn, of slowing the journey to the abode of liberation.

Joy does not reside in external objects, but in man's thoughts. Is the soul bound by the body or is the body bound by the soul? The materialist will say, "The body is everything." But the spiritualist says, "The soul is the master. This body is just a medium of existence for the all-pervading soul." As Jainism declares:

The wise who have understood the essence of religion do not have any attachment for material objects, not even for their own bodies.

One who understands this distinction between the soul and the body will not spend his life in futile pursuits. He realizes that joy does not lie in acquiring any object or entity, but in relinquishing it. The Great Seer emphasized:

Joy is not object-bound, it is thought-bound.

This is the pathway of joy, known to us as the path of non-possessiveness. When this contemplation transforms into action, then the heavens inhabit the earth, and the entire universe is filled with peace and joy.

GLOSSARY

Ācārya – spiritual preceptor; head of an ascetic group

Āgamas – scriptural texts; canonical literature

Ahiṁsā – non-violence

Ānanda – the first lay-disciple of Lord Mahāvīra

Anārya – ignoble person

Anekāntavāda – the doctrine of manifold aspects; many-pointedness

Annadātā – term used to address a benefactor, for example, a king to his subjects

Antarātmā – internal soul

Antarmuhūrtta – period of up to 48 minutes

Arhans – worthy of worship; liberated souls

Ārya – noble person

Ārya karma – noble activity

Āśrava – karmic influx

Audayika – manifestation

Avasarpiṇī kāla – regressive motion of the wheel of time

Āvaśyakatā parimāṇa – limitation of needs

Avirati – non-restraint; vowlessness

Bahīrātmā – external soul

Bhāva mana – psychical mind

Brahman – the Absolute as propounded by Hinduism

Brāhmaṇa – the priestly community according to Hinduism

Cakravartī – universal monarch

Caturmāsa – four-month monsoon retreat for ascetics

Deśāvakāsika vrata – vow to impose further restrictions for a limited time

Digvratā – vow of limiting one's movement in different directions

Dīpāvalī – Hindu festival of lights

Diśā parimāna – vow of limiting distance to be travelled

Dravya mana – physical mind

Gaṇadhara – the first ascetic disciples of a Tīrthaṅkara

Gocharī – food as alms

Guṇasthāna – stages of spiritual development

Holī, Holīkā – Hindu festival of colours

Icchā parimāṇa – limitation of desires

Jagannātha – lord of the world

Kaliyuga – corrupt age

Kārmaṇa śarīra – body of karmic particles; karmic body

Kaṣāya – passions that defile the soul like anger, ego, deceit and greed,

Kṣatriya – the warrior class according to hinduism

Kṣaya – destruction; annihilation

Kubera – the lord of wealth

Kūnika – son of king Śreṇika, king of Magadha

Laḍḍū – a sweet dish in the shape of a ball

Mahārāj – king or monk

Maharṣi – great ascetic

Mahāvīra – 'great hero', 24th Tīrthaṅkara of the Jaina religion

Mithyātva – wrong belief

Mūrchā – attachment

Naraka – hell

Nirvāṇa – liberation; release from bondage

Pañcaśīla - five principles of conduct

Pañcha-yama – five cardinal vows

Panditji – scholar

Pāpānubandhī puṇya – meritorious deeds that yield demerit; when a person moves from a good birth to a bad one on account of his ignoble actions

Paramāṇu – atom

Paramātmā – supreme soul

Parigraha – possessiveness

Parigraha parimāṇa vrata – vow of limiting one's possessions

Phālguna – month of march-april according to Indian calendar

Pramāda – invigilance; carelessness

Prāṇāyāma – breathing exercises

Puṇyānubandhī puṇya – meritorious deeds that yield merit; when a person moves from a good birth to a better one on account of his noble actions

Roṭī – indian bread

Ṛṣabhadeva – first Tīrthaṅkara of Jaina religion

Sādhaka – aspirant

Sādhanā – spiritual path

Sādhu – monk

Saṁvara – stoppage of karmic influx

Saṅgha – monastic order, congregation

Sanskāra – impressions from previous actions; values

Sarvodaya – universal welfare

Satyuga – golden age

Seṭh – a wealthy merchant

Śāstrakāra – scholars of religious texts

Śrāvaka – lay-person; house-holder

Śreṇika – the king of Rajagriha

Śūdra – persons of lower caste according to Hinduism

Shūnya – void; emptyness

Sīmandhara Svāmī – an enlightened being who now resides in the celestial region

Sthūla śarīra – gross body; physical body

Sudharmā Svāmī – prime disciple of Lord Mahāvīra, the first āchārya of Jaina saṅgha

Sūkṣma śarīra – subtle body

Sūtra – aphorisms from agamas

Tīrtha – four-fold congregation of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen

Tīrthankara – ford-builders; the omniscient spiritual teachers of the Jainas

Umāsvāti – A Jaina scholar, who lived around 2nd century B.C, the author of Tattvārtha Sūtra.

Upaśama – subsidence; cessation

Utsarpiṇī kāla – progressive motion of the wheel of time

Vaiśya – the business community according to Hinduism

Vrata – vow; restraint

Yogā – 1) school of Hinduism 2) activities of body, speech, and mind

Yogī – ascetics; meditators

EXCERPTS FROM THE UPADHYAYA SRI'S DISCOURSES

Even if a man finds innumerable mountains of gold and silver as lofty as the great Mount Kailasa, his desire, his thirst does not meet its end. Because desires are like the sky - unlimited...infinite.

The remedy to suffering is to go beyond the limitation of the self and reach out to others. You will find that the moments of utmost happiness in your life have always been those in which you uttered a word or performed an act of compassion or selfless love.

All lakes have shores, but the lake of desire is such that it has no shore - no beginning, no end. It is limitless.

Detachment to one's possessions is an art to be mastered. Such an art has no pre-requisite of philosophical knowledge or religious rituals. It only requires willingness.

When desires are limited, needs also get limited; when needs get limited, then conflicts, tensions and contradictions in the journey of life also begin to reduce, Moving beyond conflicts leads to peace, happiness and joy.

Possessiveness resides not in objects, but in thoughts. It is an impulse, an impure state of internal consciousness. When consciousness brands external objects with the labels of desire and attachment, with the labels of yours and mine, they become objects of possessiveness, not otherwise.

*****

In fact, non-possessiveness is an inner calling rather than external behaviour.

Gurudev Amar Muniji's book "Aparigraha Darshan" is an inspirational work. It is a transcript for a successful householder's life.

Today, the entire world, and progressive India at large, is in need of a spiritual, intellectual, and economically strong society, for the emergence of enthusiasm in the youth and enterprising leadership. I believe that this book will be the guiding light for such an endeavour.

Acharya Sri Chandanaji